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JAMES LUSK







JAMES LUSK

B.A. (CANTAB).;
CHEVALIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR;
CAPTAIN AND ADJUTANT
6TH BATTALION THE CAMERONIANS
(SCOTTISH RIFLES)

LETTERS & MEMORIES



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THIS little book has been written, in the first instance, because some of those who knew James have asked for it. And, secondly, it has been written for the sake of the Children whom he loved—the children of his Sister and of his Brother—who may ask for it one day, though they will never know how much they are the poorer for his passing. And, finally, it has been written to the greater glory of God, Who so wondrously fashioned his life, that it seems to us, as we look back upon it now, to have been ‘a swift and shining track straight to the Goal.’

M. T. L.

OXFORD,

December, 1916.



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NOTE

MOST of the letters which compose this book were written by Captain Lusk to his Mother. Grateful acknowledgement is due to those who have allowed us to use other letters and Magazine Articles. In many cases it has not been possible to ask for this permission, but we venture to believe that, could we have done so, it would have been granted. We are especially indebted for encouragement and help to Lieut.-Colonel T. Martin Kay, lately commanding the 6th Cameronians.



PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

JAMES LUSK was the elder son of the late John Lusk, Dunavon, Strathaven, Lanarkshire, his mother being a daughter of the late David Colville, Motherwell. He was born at Broomhouse, Lanarkshire, September 19th, 1878, and received his early education at Uddingston School and the West of Scotland Technical College, Glasgow. He entered St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1903, and took his degree in the Mechanical Sciences Tripos in 1905. He rowed in several Lady Margaret Crews.

After taking his degree he returned to Scotland, and entered the Firm of Messrs. David Colville and Sons, Ltd., of the Dalzell Steel Works, Motherwell. At first he occupied the position of Assistant Works Manager, and later became one of the Directors of the Firm. Those associated with him in a business capacity have char-

acterized him as 'an exceptionally able and clear-headed man of business.' In collaboration with Professor Barr, he carried out an important and valuable series of tests on High Tensile Steel in the Glasgow University Engineering Laboratory. He designed a Slide Rule for the calculation of weights and areas of steel, which is of great assistance to those employed in Rolling Mills. In the designing of new Plant his experience was of great benefit to the Firm. He was a member of the Iron and Steel Institute, and an Associate member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and a member of the West of Scotland Iron and Steel Institute, of which at one time he was a Vice-President. His relations with the men at the Works were always of the happiest, and one of his colleagues wrote to Mrs. Lusk on the night when the news of his death reached home,—'There will be many sad hearts in the Works to-morrow.'

James Lusk was not a man who liked publicity in any form, nor yet one who cared to talk much of the deepest things. But after his Father's death in 1913, he loyally tried to carry on the tradition of

service which was handed down to him. The Council of the Lanarkshire Christian Union passed the following minute in February, 1916:—‘We desire to minute our great sense of loss which we have sustained in the death of our esteemed member of Council, Captain James Lusk. He was a man of the utmost integrity, who at all times exhibited a true Christian character. His was a life not of words but of deeds, and he made the great sacrifice on the field of battle in the performance of his duty. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”’

In the Obituary columns of the *Temperance Leader* of January 15th, 1916, it is noted that ‘Captain Lusk . . . has been a life-long abstainer, and a member of the Scottish Temperance League since his boyhood. . . . In the case of Captain Lusk and that of other brave lads who have fallen in this cruel war, it has been clearly demonstrated that a man may be a brave soldier and an efficient leader on the battle-field without the taint of alcohol.’

James Lusk probably felt that the young men and boys of the great busy town of Motherwell had a special claim upon his

time and thoughts. He was President of their Dalzell Highland Pipe Band, and also a Director of the Junior section of the Motherwell Young Men's Christian Association. What his fellow-workers thought of him must be told in the words of a fine 'Appreciation,' contributed by one of them to their *Young Men's Magazine*, January, 1916:—

'Some years ago, when we had erected our suite of rooms for the working youths of the town, and had chosen about a dozen of these youths to act as Directors of this Junior Section along with several of our Senior Members, we looked around for two or three gentlemen who could be invited to join this newly-constituted Board, and who would bring distinction and character and personality with them into the midst of these working lads.

'Greatly daring, having heard of his interest in such work, we asked Mr. James Lusk, B.A., Cantab., to come and help us. He readily consented, and to all our subsequent meetings he brought in rich abundance the qualities and influence we so much desired. Our members came at once in contact with a very perfect Chris-

tian gentleman. His gentlemanliness, his courtesy, his kindness, and a certain air of courtliness with which he surrounded himself as with an atmosphere, all exerted a pervading influence on the lads in the section.

‘There always are and always will be certain qualities, as Arnold of Rugby told us long ago, to which we must ultimately stand cap in hand; and to the fine distinctive character of James Lusk our members rendered instant homage. His personality, as we have said, had its influence. The football-loving Juniors who thronged our rooms grew up, and many of them migrated elsewhere, where the conditions under which they played their game were not so wholesome as in the Institute of the Motherwell Y.M.C.A. It is within the writer’s knowledge that many of these young fellows found it very much easier to resist the temptations to which they were subjected, just because at an earlier period they had been permitted to associate to some extent with such a man as James Lusk. . . .

‘It was no surprise to us at the Young Men’s Institute to learn in these latter

days that the men of his Regiment paid homage to his virtues and character, as our juniors had done; neither was it any surprise to us to learn that he resigned his position on the Staff to go with his own men. That was just *his* way. . . .

‘ There were other characteristics of his which left their imprint on some of us who were associated with him in the Y.M.C.A. Young Men’s Institute. One of these was his enthusiasm. His enthusiasm was one of the earnest enduring kind that had been nourished down in these depths where visions and passions dwell, and out of which truth and beauty come because of the ever-growing and ever-deepening knowledge of life. We believe it was out of the wells that he had dug deep in his own heart, that there sprang that eager desire to help these lads with their football clubs, their gymnastics, their orchestras, their book-club, their holiday-fund and their Bible and Mission Study Circles, for he was quick to realize that all these things helped to the making of manly men.

‘ Another truth his association with us constantly reminded us of was the fact that it is as a rule the best disciplined, the best

tutored and the best educated minds that achieve the finest results. He was a clear and incisive thinker, and when his problems had passed through that acute mind of his, they were quickly assorted out into their elemental and component parts. . . .

‘ Many words will not enable us to put on record our deep abiding respect and our great admiration of the quiet, modest, lovable disposition of Captain James Lusk, of the very great abilities he possessed, and of the strong, brave, bold, fearless soul that dominated and shone through it all, and made him eager to serve alike his God, his King and his Country. It will always be one of our safely-guarded and treasured memories that we had the honour of associating with him, for he was one of the very finest types of an Officer and a gentleman that ever we have known.’

Captain Lusk took a Commission in the 6th Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), T.F., in November, 1908, and was gazetted Lieutenant, July 31st, 1910. The Cameronians are the successors of the fighting Covenanters, and the 6th Battalion are men of the district in which

Captain Lusk's home had been, the districts of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge,—names which arouse grim memories of valour in every Scotsman. From the first he took a keen interest in the efficiency of the Regiment, and gave of his best to its service. One never thought of James as a soldier in those old days, though no doubt some aspects of the work always appealed to him. But the strength of his character as an Officer, then and later, was not in any love of fighting, but in a strenuous self-forgetfulness and a keen desire to do well the thing that was wanted.

He was in Camp with the Battalion at Ayr at the end of July, 1914, when the thunder-clouds of the impending storm of the European War began to gather black and lowering. From the date of mobilization, the narrative of Captain Lusk's life may be followed in his own letters, which form the groundwork of the present volume.

To James Lusk, as to many another, the great call for service and sacrifice seemed to be just what he had been waiting for. It gave him his opportunity for the exercise of a devotion and a heroism which those

who knew him best had hardly dreamed that he possessed.

One nearly related to James has succeeded with remarkable felicity in putting into words what we had been vaguely feeling. We quote at length from his letter to Mrs. Lusk after her son's death:—

‘It was a great privilege and a sad pleasure to read those precious letters about James, which you kindly sent. I wish to let you know what impression they made on me, for they have set me a-thinking about him and his life, now that it is ended here, so greatly to our grief.

‘I confess that these letters were a revelation to me. I thought that I knew James pretty well, but these letters from entire strangers up till a short time ago to him and to us, all revealed more to me about him than I was prepared for. James, as we all could see, was reticent on the higher things of heart and life, as many Scotch people, myself included, are; and his little hesitation in utterance doubtless made him more so than he naturally was. I once, as I thought, had a glimpse of his inner nature. It was when I met him first at Dunavon after his father had passed away.

He and I happened to be coming together round the house at night from the back. He, with his usual consideration and helpfulness, took the old man's arm to guide me along the paths. We naturally fell into an intimate talk, the darkness perhaps helping us both. I spoke to him about his father's eminent goodness, and of the precious example left by his life to all of us. He responded with hearty appreciation, which seemed at the time to give me a peep into him, which was pleasing, if not unexpected. Probably other friends of James had similar experiences at times. But these letter-writers appear to have seen quite clearly what others saw but dimly. They made acquaintance with him at the great period of his life, and in circumstances fitted to brush aside all formality and conventionality. It was the War that did it. The War, with its reality and sternness, has evidently been both developing and revealing the badness of some persons and nations, and the goodness of others; and it seems to have developed as well as revealed the strength and the beauty of James' character. It seems to me as if we saw the tender buds

peeping at times timidly out of the ground, while these strangers saw the flowers in full bloom and sweetness. The charm of what they saw won the respect, the admiration and the love of both his inferiors and superiors. And how glad they evidently were to tell, in sincerity, not in flattery, what they had seen, to you, to whom what they wrote was sure to be more than it could be to any other person in the world! They wanted to tell his mother what an impression her son's gallantry and high-toned character had made upon them who saw him at his best. They have helped us to know James better than perhaps any of us, even you, knew him before; and that new knowledge is well fitted to raise him high in our loving memory. Had it not been for the War, his good qualities would have been shown by degrees in other ways. Had he lived long, as we all hoped that he would, his life would have been doubtless a prosperous, honourable business life, a life of strict integrity and much usefulness, in which he would have been an influence for good among his workmen and others. But God ordered things otherwise. A great crisis in the country's

history, the greatest indeed in the world's history, occurred, and the call came for defenders of Right against Might, of high ideals and liberties, and James was ready and obeyed the call of duty, not counting even his life dear to him, and that supreme sacrifice in the great cause was required of him.'

A few of the letters referred to are inserted among Captain Lusk's own at the points to which they relate; a larger number will be found at the end of the book. It remains to gather together here some stray leaves which are too precious to be lost, from the wealth of appreciation which was showered upon his Mother after his passing.

Of his military efficiency:—

'He was a good soldier.'

'An exceedingly capable, thorough and conscientious Officer, and we all liked him. He was straight always, and fearless to a degree.'

'If ever a man did his job thoroughly, he has done his.'

Of his kindliness :—

‘ I will always remember James Lusk’s kindness to me about five years ago when I lost my mother, and those were the kind of things he was doing daily.’

‘ I cannot tell you of a third of the kindness he showed me during my stay in Motherwell, nor of all I heard while there of many acts of kindness and thoughtfulness he did to others, of which no one heard anything.’

‘ I expect he went through his days doing so many kind things that he did not look for thanks.’

Of the many attractive sides of his character :—

‘ His bravery and his gentleness.’

‘ His quiet consistent Christian life at home, and his self-sacrifice and heroism abroad.’

‘ His sweet playing, so like his spirit.’

‘ Every day there is some reminder of him—even the toys on the nursery floor which *he* had given.’

‘ To us who knew James and his never-tiring work for the Highest, it may per-

haps seem that he would *rejoice* in giving even his life, if it had to be. James had a greater power for sacrifice than anyone else I know.'

'Those of us who are so proud and glad to have known him, and to have come into touch with his passion for whatsoever things are lovely, will feel a new pulse now of the tide of calm and beauty he inspired; and in the memory and fellowship of his brave and quiet spirit we dedicate ourselves again to the service of life.'

I

FALKIRK

August, 1914—March, 1915

I

FALKIRK

August, 1914—March, 1915

Immediately after the declaration of War on the ever-memorable August 4th, 1914, the 6th Cameronians were sent to Falkirk. On August 7th Lieutenant Lusk was appointed Transport Officer of the Battalion, and in those first days of hurried preparations and dispositions, his work was to scour the country-side for the necessary horses and carts. The experience of the future months justified his selection of horses, and he used to display them with pride to his friends in their field at Bantaskine.

Then followed the routine work of training and camp life. Here is Lieutenant Lusk's account of the day's work:—

AUGUST 16, 1914.

I get up at 5 a.m. and parade the men of my transport section at 5.45. Then at

6 o'clock they water, groom and feed the horses. Breakfast at 7, then get ready for the day's work. On Friday we were out on the road from 8 till 2 p.m. (fourteen miles), and after that we have to bring the regimental rations from the station to headquarters, and then distribute them to the various schools where the different companies are billeted. . . Everyone must be in at 9.30 p.m., when the roll is called. Discipline is being more rigidly observed than at camp, but everybody is quite cheerful under it.

But before much time had passed an important decision had to be made, and two letters to his Mother will show the spirit in which Lieutenant Lusk made it :—

AUGUST 23, 1914.

A good many Territorial regiments, including our own, have been asked if they—or at least some of their number—would be willing to serve abroad if required. It is generally considered very unlikely that Territorials would be sent to any places of real importance if they volunteered to serve outside of the British Isles. I have

felt quite sure that you would wish me to go wherever I was most needed, and it makes little difference whether that is at home in this country or elsewhere, and so I have told them that I for one was quite willing to serve abroad if it was required. I have had no hesitation at all in saying this, because I have felt so clearly led to the view that it is the right thing to do in case it should be necessary, and I know that you will feel the same.

AUGUST 29, 1914.

Our contribution to the Foreign Service Battalion, consisting of five officers and about 240 men, went off to their new station to-day—they are only a few miles away. It was with mingled feelings that the rest of us watched them go, but our turn may come later, and we must be willing to go where we are most needed.

This 'Foreign Service Battalion' was never actually sent out, so Lieutenant Lusk lost nothing by not being chosen for it. During that first winter of the War, his work was in Falkirk, and during most of it, it was that of Staff

Captain to the Scottish Rifle Brigade. He took up these new duties on November 6th, and resigned them on March 9th. The reason of his resignation was that a short time previously his own Battalion had been told that they would shortly be sent abroad without the rest of the Brigade, and he wanted to go with them.

A few extracts from his letters will illustrate the life of that winter:—

OCTOBER 23, 1914.

It is difficult to overtake all that seems to be before me waiting attention just now, but I am well and glad to be able to do it. . . . It will be some little time before I take up my new duties at Headquarters. . . . The Headquarters' Staff consists of:— Brigadier-General S. W. Hare, commanding No. 3 Brigade Area, (including S.R. Brigade; Royal Field Artillery; Army Service Corps; and Field Ambulance Corps): (2) Captain E. S. Girdwood (Brigade Major): and (3) your unworthy brother (Staff Captain). So you see I shall have dealings with all these different arms of the Service.

NOVEMBER 12, 1914.

I am writing in the office of Brigade Headquarters at the Crown Hotel. It is

a very comfortable room with a fire in it, and five tables and a sideboard, with no end of papers spread on them all. There are two Orderly Room clerks always writing or typing something, and they always like either the Brigade Major or the Staff Captain to be in the room, or at least on the premises. There are three telephones. One direct to Sir John Spencer Ewart's room in Edinburgh (Commander of the Forces in Scotland); another direct to General Egerton at Bridge of Allan (Commanding the Lowland Division); and a general telephone, which is kept going most of the day. There seems to be an impression now that the 6th will not go for some time, and that they have changed their minds about sending it without the 7th and 8th: but this may be only rumour; it is difficult to tell when no one seems to know, not even the Generals themselves.

FEBRUARY 21, 1915.

There has been some rumour of the possibility of the 6th going out without the rest of the Brigade, and if they do I mean to resign my Staff appointment and go with them. They may not let me give it

up, but it is considered unlikely that they would refuse to release me if I wanted to go.

MARCH 14, 1915.

We had a nice Communion Service in the Parish Church this afternoon. I played the organ, and it was a real pleasure to play the things that I like so well. Just before the Service began, I played 'O Saviour of the World.' *I do like it*, and it does so remind me of other days and other places. Then we had Psalm 46 to Stroudwater, Paraphrase 35 to Kilmar-nock, and Paraphrase 2 to Salzburg, then the National Anthem, and then I played Bennet's 'Lord now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace.' I chose everything myself, and there was no one to say that they liked what had been chosen or the music, and it all meant a great deal to me.

MARCH 18, 1915.

We got a message this afternoon that the 6th Battalion will leave Falkirk for Southampton on Saturday, the time will be given us later. So at last we are released from home service, and are to be

given an opportunity of more real usefulness; may we be found faithful when our turn comes. Nothing else seems to matter quite so much as that. I don't trust myself, but of course I mustn't try to do that, but trust Another.

Side-lights upon the thoroughness of his work, and his happy relations with those whom he worked with, are afforded by letters from other people.

The Town Clerk of Falkirk wrote after his death:—‘I can tell you he was highly esteemed in Falkirk.’ Another gentleman in Larbert, who had come into contact with him while he was acting as Billeting Officer for his Battalion in the district, wrote:—‘His business tact, his high sense of honour and duty, and withal the kindly and courteous manner in which he conducted all his affairs, made it really a pleasure to meet and do business with him.’ Yet another testimony comes through a friend:—‘When Harry was at Grangemouth, where James had been for some time, he found his memory there very fragrant.’ And an Officer in the R.A.M.C., who had been associated with Captain Lusk at that period, wrote to him to France some time afterwards:—‘I had a call the other day from an Artillery Brigadier (formerly in Bridge of Allan), and in conversation he ex-

pressed the opinion that the Stenhouse Muir Stables were about the best that had been put up anywhere. I thought you would like to hear this.'

Finally, one has glimpses into a happy little circle of friends which formed itself during that winter, among whom James had his own place. There are some treasured memorials of some of these friendships:—'I always felt one could never be in contact with him without feeling one was near a *very* noble character.' 'He has left a beautiful and blameless life.' 'No one can have known your son and not go through life feeling the better for that knowledge.' 'Somehow at once one *felt* his goodness and strength. . . . It helps one to be better, I think, just to look at and think about a friend like Captain Lusk.'

II

EARLY WEEKS IN FRANCE

March—June, 1915

II

EARLY WEEKS IN FRANCE

March—June, 1915

The 6th Cameronians crossed from Southampton to Havre on Saturday, 20th March, 1915. The story of their arrival there, and of their first experience of the trenches, is told at length in the following letters:—

MARCH 23, 1915.

I am writing this in the train between — and —! This doesn't convey much information about our whereabouts, does it? . . . On Saturday afternoon we got our horses and vehicles on to our ship straight from the train. The horses were led up an inclined gangway and were arranged in rows close beside one another on two decks, and the vehicles were hoisted into the holds by cranes. . . . We cast off from

the quay about 7 p.m. and set forth upon our voyage. John and I were the only officers of our Battalion in our ship, and between us we had 50 men and 48 horses. There were other portions of regiments on board too and about 600 horses. The main part of our Battalion went over in a fast ship, and the remainder of our transport vehicles and horses crossed in a third ship, so we were pretty well split up. When we slipped out of Southampton Harbour and reached the open sea, the moon just gave enough light to show us that two of our grand Navy's silent watchers had slipped quietly alongside of us, one on the port beam and the other on the starboard. We watched them late into the night, and sometimes they seemed little more than black shadows on the surface of the water, and sometimes came so near that we could make out their shapes, and saw that they were torpedo boat destroyers. Not a light showed either on our ship or on our escorts. Fortunately the sea was calm and the crossing quiet. We left Southampton at about 7 p.m., and next morning we wakened up to find ourselves in a large bay or estuary whose name

I cannot give. There were many other ships round about us, and a big Hospital one lay quite near us. This was Sabbath morning. About 10 o'clock we got the anchor up and steamed inside the harbour, and then tugs got hold of us and got us alongside the quay. We soon got the horses ashore into a big shed, and tied them up there. Then the dock cranes hoisted out our vehicles, and by 4.30 the last vehicle was ashore. Next we got the horses harnessed into them, and started off on a five miles' march through the streets of the town and up a winding hill to a camp where we were to stay the night. Everything was under canvas, and the horses were picketed out in the open, and it was bitterly cold. I slept—or tried to sleep—with two others in a tent with a wooden floor, and except for the cold it was all right. There was to be an inspection of transports next morning at 8 a.m., so we were up before six getting the horses watered and fed and harnessed, and the men given their breakfast. The inspecting officer turned up at 9.30! About 2.30 p.m. everything was packed up, and we moved off again down the hill to one of the

goods stations of the town. We got there at 4.30, watered the horses again, and by 7 o'clock had all the horses and vehicles into the train. These days have been very strenuous, but we have got through it all wonderfully well. Some of the mules have been very obstinate in refusing to be led into the railway trucks; where persuasion has failed I got a strong rope, passed it round their hind quarters and put three men on either end of the rope. This was always successful! At 8 p.m. we were under way again. Before starting we got some hot cocoa and tea issued to us, and, after our hard work and fast of about seven hours, there seemed nothing quite so good! This time, instead of splitting up the Battalion into three trains as in our country, and running them at a fast speed, they put everything, that is men, horses and vehicles, on one long train of about fifty coaches, and trundled us along at about 25 miles an hour. It is now about noon-day on Tuesday, and we are still going along in a north-easterly direction to a destination unknown. Two Hospital trains have already passed us going the other way. The men have wrought very

well. The French railways use exactly the same sort of trucks for horses as for troops, and each truck is marked on the outside:—Men 40, Horses 8. They do sprinkle a little straw on the trucks where the men are, but that is the only difference. There are, of course, no seats of any kind. The horses are put parallel to the rails in two rows of four facing each other, and all the saddlery and harness goes in the space in the centre; also two men to look after them. Their head-ropes are tied to rings in the roof of the truck (which is covered), and the strong breast-rope is fastened in front of each row and made fast to the sides of the truck. Each horse has his nose-bag hung round his neck. The country is very flat; a good deal of it has been ploughed and is being harrowed. Some of the lines we have passed over are anything but main lines, and a great many of the wayside signals are being wrought by women.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, 24TH INST.

We have passed one night in billets, and go on to-day to join our Brigade.

MARCH 25, 1915.

It is about 5 o'clock on Thursday afternoon, and I am sitting in the little house where some of us are billeted, and I shall try to begin again where I left off in my first letter. I finished my last letter rather hurriedly, so that it could go off at once. I had got to the point where we were just starting off to march to join our Brigade. We left at about 10 a.m. and reached the place where we now are about one o'clock yesterday. That was Wednesday. We are not quite at our destination yet, as we are to move a few miles away to-morrow, and I suppose that will be as nearly the end of our journey as we can judge just now. The travelling has been pretty constant since we left Falkirk last Friday night, and we have just gone on and on, so that I have to stop and think what we did each day and night. . . . Monday night was spent . . . trundling along at about 25 miles an hour, and also the most of Tuesday. We got to the end of it at 5.15 p.m., and by about 6.45 I had my transport off the train, and the horses and mules all harnessed and hooked to their vehicles, ready to go to spend the night in

billets, when the rain came down. It poured. The men of the Battalion were all right, but my wretched transport horses had to spend the night in a field that had been used for a similar purpose before and was inches deep in mud. We put the blankets on them and, of course, they lay down in the mud, and everything was such a pleasing sight next morning ! I slept that night in the same room as the Adjutant in an empty house. I lay down on my valise and blankets on the floor about 11 o'clock and slept with few awakenings till six in the morning. I got up then and went to my muddy field to see to the watering and feeding of my 72 beasts. Then, as usual, the blankets and cooking utensils had to be collected from the Battalion billets, and everything belonging to the transport picked out of the mud and got on the road ready for the march. Several times my big wagons stuck in the mud, but we got them out again. It was about one o'clock when we reached the little village where we now are, and all along the road troops got more and more numerous, and motor-cars, motor-ambulance wagons, motor-

transport wagons came and went in continuous streams, and we knew we were getting nearer the centre of things. To-day has been wet, and mud is even thicker than usual. I had my clothes off for the first time last night since leaving Falkirk. There is some rumour of baths or tubs of some sort being available not far away, but we have not yet sought them out. They say that we are not far from the trenches, but we shall get reliable information soon on that point, as our four Company Commanders,—Captains McKenzie, Brown, Boyd and Murray,—are going into them to-morrow night without any other officers or men of our Battalion with them, just to see what things are like. So far as one can judge from the sound of the guns, this portion of the line appears to be comparatively peaceful. There have been several loud bangs this afternoon that sounded not far away, but there were not very many of them altogether. The roads here are narrow, and the centre portion of them is paved with square-shaped blocks of stone; the sides are of mud, thick, deep mud, churned up by passing traffic.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1915.

I sent off my letter to you to-day, and now it is 7 o'clock and we are ready for our evening meal. We have moved into new quarters since morning, but not far away from yesterday's billets. There are eight officers at Battalion Headquarters. They are the Colonel, Major Shaw, the Adjutant, Dr. Loudon, Lieutenant Hamilton (Quartermaster), Captain Lawrie (Machine Gun Officer), the Interpreter and myself. We sleep on the floors of different rooms of an empty house and take meals at a round table that just holds eight. Thus far we are most fortunate, but I suppose we must look for many changes. We have candle light only, and our candlesticks are usually empty bottles. The water throughout the whole countryside is not considered safe to drink without boiling, and it is best to filter it and then boil it. The troops drink a great deal of tea, and no doubt this accounts for the absence of illness that would otherwise have resulted if the water had been drunk unboiled. The country is painfully flat, and everywhere along both sides of the roads there are ditches with stagnant

water in them, but I suppose the open air life of the people counteracts these unwholesome influences . . . The weather has stopped raining, and my transport field is beginning to dry up. I had a *hot bath* to-day—my first bath of any kind since leaving Falkirk. It was down in the basement of a disused brewery, and two big zinc baths had been arranged on a concrete floor, and a hose pipe led into it from a big boiler above. The place is now used as a laundry for washing the clothes of the troops, so I put on a complete change of raiment and felt much refreshed.

P.S.—*Sabbath Forenoon.* We have just had a short voluntary Service in a billet that was a school. The Colonel read some portions of the Prayer Book and a Lesson, and we sang the 100th Psalm to Old Hundred, and 'O God of Bethel' to Salzburg. There was no instrument of any kind available, so I had to raise the tunes myself. We all had our caps off, and the men sang well. To-day is dry but very cold. I have many people to thank for letters, but hope to do it through time. I am very well, and hungry for every meal.

SABBATH, MARCH 28, 1915.

We have now been exactly one week on the other side of the Channel, and the time has passed so quickly that it seems much shorter than that. . . . We are staying in a little village not many miles to the southwest of a fair-sized town.* The village was at one time occupied by the Germans, and there is evidence of them in abundance. Great numbers of the inhabitants have left their homes and gone elsewhere. Some of them have taken their belongings with them and left their houses empty, and others have gone hurriedly and left everything. The troops are allowed to billet in these empty houses, and, in the case of the full ones, notices have been posted up on the doors forbidding any soldier to enter (except by order of an Officer during the course of an action) on pain of being charged with looting. . . . The Germans dropped a few shells on this village to-day, and some of them exploded near us, and fragments were picked up with considerable interest. Some of our officers have been up to the trenches to see what things are like. The trenches are about a

* Armentières.

mile away from our billets, and on this portion of the line there happens to be good cover to screen the approach of troops from the enemy's observation, so that one can go from here right to the trenches in the day time. At other portions of the line this is only possible after darkness has fallen. . . . I shall probably go to-morrow to see what my duties will be when the Battalion takes its tour of duty in them. The Battalion goes on duty in the trenches for six days at a time, but each half Battalion is relieved by the other half after three days' duty. Then at the end of the six days I believe we go a good deal further back and rest for some days. My transport are all in a field about a mile further back than this, and I go there in the early morning before breakfast to see to them, and return here for meals.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1915.

To-day is specially busy, as the Battalion goes to-night to take its turn in the trenches, but there has not been much firing in our portion of the line recently. . . . I have been riding a good deal, and shall ride more this coming week probably, because my transport is in a field about

three miles from the trenches, and I have got to get backwards and forwards all the time.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1915.

Did I tell you?—I don't think I did—that I had my first experience of the trenches on Wednesday night, which was the first night the Regiment took over its section of the line* from an English Regiment of Territorials who are out beside us. It was full moon and a splendid night for seeing,—and being seen! I went round the section of the line allotted to our Battalion with the Colonel and Major Shaw, but I don't think I was in the trenches for more than perhaps an hour and a half altogether. It was a weird sight under the moonlight. The line is very zig-zag and irregular—more so than I had expected to find. It is pretty narrow, and not always easy to pass along behind the men, but every here and there to the rear are what are called 'dug-outs'—simply big holes in the clay, with wooden frames supporting some sort of roof which gives head cover. Some of these have a little straw in them, and everyone has a

* This was at 'La Bouttellerie,' near Fleurbaix.

little brazier for cooking—it is usually just a pail with holes in the sides of it—and cooking goes on nearly all the time. The men use their mess tins to make their tea and fry their bacon and cook their eggs (when they get them), and make their stew at all times of day and night when they are not actually standing to arms. We have loopholes and periscopes and trench-pumps (for the water). They are a good deal drier now than they have been all winter, but even yet there are places in our section that I measured with a stick to be eighteen inches deep in water on either side of the board that forms the platform. Out in front of our line, between us and the Germans, are our barbed wire entanglements and what are called our ‘listening posts.’ You get out to these by going flat along a ditch with the clay thrown up on one side to give some head cover.

Just now there are three of us living in one room of this farm—the Quartermaster, the Interpreter, and myself. We sleep in it, cook in it, and take our meals in it, and through it the farmer himself has to pass on his way to and from his bedroom which opens off it. Fortunately there is a window

which can open. Needless to say, many a thing wants washing, and your store of soap would be well-nigh exhausted before things were made right, but we don't mind that much. We wash at the pump in the farm-yard which is just outside the door. The pump again is just six feet away from a large square manure and straw heap which forms the centre of the farm-yard, and round this square the farm buildings are placed; and these contain the farmer and his family, the pigs, the hens, the horses, the calves, the rabbits and the dogs and the rats! In a field at one side are my horses, mules and wagons—there they sleep, and from there they go forth daily to do their work.

There are characteristic touches in some shorter letters a little later—characteristic of James's mechanical ingenuity on the one hand, and of his love of music on the other:—

SABBATH NIGHT, APRIL 4, 1915.

Things have been very quiet to-day, possibly because it is Easter Sunday. While you were at Church this morning, I was mending a little bridge over a ditch that forms the entrance to my transport field,

and, later in the day, I had to ride several miles to see the new billets.

FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1915.

There isn't much news this evening to tell you about. The day has been filled up so far as it has gone by various duties, none of them of special importance. I have been working a good deal of late at deadening the noise made by my wagons on the road. A good deal of improvement has already been effected, both on the wagons themselves and on the harness, so that they are less likely to be heard at a distance on quiet nights, as they go up to the trenches.

MONDAY, MAY 3, 1915.

I had a treat this afternoon. I went to the Church of this town, which is quite a large building with coloured glass windows. Many candles were burning at the Altars and Shrines, the sun was shining on the coloured lights, and the organ was being played. Oh, what a sound it is to hear in the midst of such surroundings after six weeks of silence! The louder it swells, the higher it lifts you through heights that are limitless in the grandeur

of their feeling. . . . To-night I can hear the Church chimes striking 9.30, and what a strange sound it is to the accompaniment of the crack, crack of the rifles as they go off, not many miles away, but quite distinct in the stillness.

It was some weeks before they had their real Baptism of Fire. The story of that also must be told in Captain Lusk's own words:—

10.45 p.m., MONDAY NIGHT,
MAY 10, 1915.

I am pretty tired to-night, but I must write a line to let you know that I am well and safe, and so are John and Erskine and all our other Officers. We have all been through a big fight—the others have been more in the centre of it than I have. Regiments near us have suffered heavily, but we have been particularly fortunate. But I must tell you about it to-morrow. I had an experience last night between 9 and 11 p.m. that you can have no conception of. Our side started an attack by the usual Artillery bombardment of the German lines, followed by an Infantry advance.* This advance was not made by

* This was near La Cordonnierie.

our Battalion, who remained in the same line of trenches throughout the fight.

Fighting continued all day, and got worse when night fell. It was my duty as Brigade Transport Officer to get into touch with Brigade Headquarters and make arrangements regarding the bringing up of rations or whatever else was required.

I went along a road running parallel to the trench line, and I got along it and back again alive because God was keeping me. There is no other explanation possible, for cover there was none. Your prayers had done it. It was dark, but a farm with its hay-stacks was blazing on the left of this road, on the right were our own guns shooting shell after shell over my head. The German guns were answering, and round about me right, left, in front, behind their shells were bursting with terrific noise, and rifle bullets were coming across, now in front, now behind, now overhead, with that whistle that we know so well.

Through it all I came untouched, and as I went and came again there was given me a wonderful feeling of confidence that

took away all fear, and I knew that hands were being held up for me by my own.

It quietened down towards morning, and to-day it has been almost calm and quiet. No ground has been gained by us and nothing lost, and we are back to normal conditions, and very thankful it is over. I am perfectly well, and so are the others.

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1915.

I wrote to you hurriedly last night, and am trying to take more time to-day to tell you more about things that have been taking place these last days. Now that things are over, there does not appear to be any objection to telling what took place. We knew more than a week ago that we were to make an attack on a certain date which would be given us later, and great preparations were made for it, and had indeed been going on for many weeks. Engineers spent weeks and weeks in widening main roads leading towards the trench line, and nearer the time more batteries of artillery were brought up, more infantry, more engineers, more signallers, some cavalry and more field ambulances.

At last we were told that the attack

would commence at an early hour on Saturday morning, May 8th. Our Battalion was given its position in the assembly trenches (in rear of main trench), and given its orders as to direction of advance and its objective on the other side of the German trenches. Every man carried two days' rations on him and 250 rounds of ammunition, and, besides this, great stores of both rations and ammunition were heaped behind our main trenches. One night some weeks ago my transport took up to one of these stores 500,000 rounds for the use of a certain section of the trench line.

Great-coats and blankets were left behind; and men, and Officers too, carried a Cardigan jacket and waterproof sheet in addition to other necessities such as mess tin, water bottle, entrenching tools and haversack, till everyone felt just like a Christmas tree.

On Friday evening it was raining, but we were all quite cheerful, and the feeling I had reminded me very much of the feeling one always has as one sits in an Eight in the middle of the river, stripped, and waiting for the starting gun to go!

The Battalion was all ready to march off to its assembly trenches in rear of the main trench, when an order came from the Brigade that operations were postponed for 24 hours and that all orders held good for the following day.

I happened to be senior of all the six Transport Officers in the Brigade, and so I was told that I would perform the duties of Brigade Transport Officer, and that all orders for movement of the transport of all six Battalions would be sent to me direct from the 8th Divisional Headquarters. There are four Regular Battalions and two Territorial Battalions in our Brigade.

At two minutes to five o'clock on Sunday morning our Artillery bombardment started, and continued for two hours, tapering off after the first hour and a half.

It was my duty to stay back with the Brigade transports about three miles from the trenches. Everything was ready to move at a moment's notice, and I could do nothing but await orders.

About 7.30 the first motor-ambulance came down the road leading from the trenches with wounded on it, then they

became more frequent, then groups of men and single men came walking back with slight wounds to arms and hands, then more ambulances with lying-down cases in them, and men sitting beside the drivers with bandaged heads.

Then the stream seemed to stop for several hours and only a few came back at intervals.

You can imagine how we who were kept back watched all this.

Despatch-riders on motor-cycles came tearing along the road in both directions. There was no speed limit; they passed like streaks. Mounted orderlies came back from our Artillery positions at full gallop, and we knew that it was ammunition that they had been sent for. Later on up the road came the teams with their loads, team after team of six horses, some at the trot but most at the gallop, with their riders sitting tight with their right arms over the shoulders of their off horses. The limbered wagons with their load of shells rattled behind the horses' hoofs. Towards the afternoon things seemed to be a little quieter, and rumours came back about all sorts of things. Then, after all that wait-

ing, my turn came at last. Just before eight o'clock p.m., a Despatch rider on a motor-cycle brought me a message from the Headquarters of the Division.

It said that the Brigade would be moved to a certain place given by a map reference, at a time not definitely known, and that I was to get into touch with the Brigade and arrange for the bringing up of rations. It was getting dark by this time. I sent round a message to all the Transport Officers to have everything ready to move up when I gave the order, and I set out to find the Brigade. I took my fastest horse and had with me the Transport Officer of the Second Battalion Scottish Rifles and three mounted Orderlies. What a relief to get something to do! Off we went down the road towards the trenches at a gallop. My horse,—bought at Carluke,—was the fastest of them all and I led the way. Within about half a mile of the trenches we dismounted, and, leaving our horses at a farm in charge of the orderlies, we—that is Stirling (the other Officer's name) and I—went forward on foot. The positions of the different roads and fields were quite familiar to us, as we had been there

many times before under the comparatively peaceful conditions of merely holding the trench line, and we knew approximately where the Headquarters of the Brigade might possibly be.

It was by this time 9 o'clock, and the night was dark. We had to turn along a road that ran parallel to the trenches, go along it perhaps a quarter of a mile, then take a track across fields in the direction of the trenches till we struck a second road, also running parallel with the trench line. Then the next thing to be done was to go along this road, and try to get touch with the Brigade by field telephones, which are laid between Brigade Headquarters and Artillery Batteries.

Crossing these fields the fire had been bad enough, but when we reached this second road there was a perfect inferno round about us. There were our own guns in every field along its length shooting across the road just over our heads, and the German shells were searching for them. Flash followed flash lighting up the darkness,—bang followed bang with terrific force, as shells went from our side and shells burst from their side, and rifle

bullets pinged and whistled through the air. There were blazing hay-stacks on one side of the road, that lit up the darkness with a weird light. Along it we went from battery to battery. The first one told us that they had been speaking to our Brigade, but that the plug had now been taken out. On we went to the next one: 'Sorry, the wire must be cut,' they said. On to the next: 'Can't do it, sir,' they said. Then on again. The firing was getting worse, and we doubled to the next place, where they had their telephone down in a cellar. This time they could do it, and I sent a message down to arrange a spot to which I would bring rations and water for the Brigade. Then we set out again on that same road to order up the Transports of the six Battalions. When we were about to leave the shelter of this place on the backward journey, the shells were bursting so near us and in such rapid succession that I said we must wait till this quietens a little. We made certain arrangements between us about the carrying back of the message, that, if either of us was knocked out, the other would 'carry on,' and then we started and ran

for about half-a-mile—then lay down flat on our faces to recover breath—then up and on again, stopped under cover of a farm building to get breath again, then started down that track across the fields once more, and here we walked, for there were too many telephone wires about the height of one's chin across the pathway to make running much good. By now we had got out of the hottest part of it, and it was only an occasional shell that came across us and an occasional bullet that whistled close.

At last we reached our horses, but how we ever returned alive from our journey on that open road, where cover there was none, God knows. It must be that He honours the prayers of those at home who care for us. I was given a feeling of quiet confidence that we would get through, and all fear seemed to be taken away.

‘As Thou didst help our fathers,
Help Thou our host to-day!

Jehovah of the Thunders,
Lord God of Battles, hear!

What a Sabbath it was! The earth seemed full of anger; and as morning began to dawn, and the thunder of the

guns died away, we thanked God for the lives of those we cared for in the trenches; very few of our men were hit, and not a single Officer in our Battalion. Unfortunately it has been otherwise with several of the other regiments in our Brigade.

I am not at liberty to give you the military result of this fighting for our portion of the line. Conditions here are more normal and now we realize how very different the mere holding of the line is from a definite battle. The former means desultory firing only on the part of artillery, machine-guns, and rifles;—the other is something else.

In the 'Big Fight' of May 9th, the 6th Scottish Rifles had been singularly favoured in losing none of their Officers. It was not to be expected that such immunity would be long continued. The first to fall, just a week later, was one for whom Captain Lusk had a specially warm regard. The loving care which he bestowed upon the memorial to mark his resting-place was wholly like him. His own account, which follows, is supplemented by one from the Chaplain of the Battalion:—

MONDAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1915.

The Sabbaths seem to be memorable days with us here. Sabbath the 9th of

May was the battle day—our first big fight. Yesterday, in the comparative quietness of the afternoon, we lost our first Officer. Captain Lawrie, our Machine Gun Officer, was shot through the head when going along one of the communication trenches from one of his guns to the other.* He had stopped to speak to two men, and had possibly straightened himself up so that his head showed over the parapet. I was especially fond of Lawrie. . . . He had such a nice face and was just altogether such a nice soul. Oh, it is so sad that one should be taken and another left. It happened yesterday afternoon. I went up at about 6 o'clock. A grave had already been dug in a little soldiers' cemetery just behind the trench lines, where men of other regiments had been laid, and this one was for Allan Lawrie. Mr. MacGibbon our Chaplain was with us, and we were glad of that. He was brought on a stretcher, wrapped in a waterproof sheet and with his head covered. We fell in behind,—Colonel, Major, Doctor, Adjutant, Chaplain and myself. The stretcher was laid alongside, and he was lifted from it and

* Near Le Tilleloy.

laid to rest. Our heads were bared, and in the midst of the cracks of the rifle shots the Chaplain stood at the head of the grave and prayed. It was 7.30 on Sabbath Evening, May 16th. . . . We could have missed many another better than him. His horse will miss him too. . . . God is over all and His ways must be Best. And we must 'carry on.'

MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 24, 1915.

One of Lawrie's men has made a wooden plate to go on a cross which we shall put at his grave, and I am trying to carve an inscription on this piece of wood. I have begun to do it myself with what tools I can get, and I hope I shall have time to finish it properly. I would like to do it myself. It is better and more permanent to cut the letters on the wood than simply to paint them.

TUESDAY NIGHT, MAY 25, 1915.

I am using any spare time I have in carving an inscription on a piece of oak wood to put on a Cross on Allan Lawrie's grave. Did I tell you this already? I have got a small chisel and my penknife,

but am getting on wonderfully with it, though it will take several days to finish.

FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 28, 1915.

I am still busy in spare moments working at the cutting of the letters on the plate for Lawrie's grave. It takes time, and, as Lawrie himself was an artist and drew well, I do not wish anything unworthily done to mark his resting place.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 1915.

Did I tell you that I finished the carving of the plate for Lawrie's grave last Wednesday, and we got it put up on the very day that we were ordered to leave that district? I think I did tell you that I was sending a rubbing of it to his father and another to his fiancée, and I am sending now to you the roughest possible impression of it. One is done partly with saddlers' beeswax, but it was so unsuitable that I had to stop it and finish with pencil. The ones I have sent are both better than these ones I now send to you. . . . I wrote a letter to Mr. Lawrie yesterday. I tried to write it as well as I could.

[FROM THE REV. J. MACGIBBON, C.F.]

I think the first of our Officers killed was Captain Lawrie. . . After Lawrie was buried behind the trenches, Captain Lusk procured an oak tablet to be placed on the Cross which marked Lawrie's grave. The carving of the inscription was a labour of love. The proper tools for carving were not procurable. He began with a penknife and latterly procured a chisel. Day by day he occupied his spare time cutting out the letters. Though his tools were primitive the letters were perfectly formed. When he had finished the whole inscription, his fastidious taste found that the surface was unequal. He ruthlessly planed this smooth which involved fresh labour in deepening nearly all the letters; yet he stuck to it working for hours on end, to make the whole as worthy as possible of the comrade who had trusted him. Then he made a rubbing of the tablet to send to Lawrie's father, trying first one process and then another and another, until he could get the best reproduction.

Three more letters will bring us down over a month of comparative quiet to the memorable events of the middle of June:—

FRIDAY NIGHT, JUNE 4, 1915.

They told us on Tuesday afternoon that our Battalion would be relieved in the trenches that night (which made only five days instead of six), and further that we were to move the next day, Wednesday, away from our 23rd Brigade and 8th Division, and join the 154th Brigade of the 51st (Highland) Division. So we got everything ready, and the whole Battalion and its Transport started on a ten mile 'trek' in a South Westerly direction. After about four hours' marching, we reached our destination, and while on the march our two travelling kitchens were working, and water was being boiled for making tea, so that the whole Battalion got a hot meal served out to them immediately they reached their billets. On these 'treks' there is always a good deal for me to do after the march is over, as kits and mails and blankets and rations require to be distributed to the different Company billets, and they are often scattered, so that the furthest of them might be a mile or so

apart. These I have to find as best I can, generally in the dark and over unknown roads, so that on Wednesday I was in the saddle continuously,—with the exception of a few minutes now and then—from 2 p.m., till midnight. When midnight came and the work was done, I lay down on my valise in the open field beside my horses, pulled off my boots and jacket, and got between the blankets and slept till 6.30 a.m., when it was time to get up again to water the horses. This has to be done at a Canal half a mile away, as there is no water nearer.

. . . This new Division appears to be entirely Territorial, but, notwithstanding its name, there are a good many English Regiments mixed up with Scotch ones in it.

MONDAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1915.

Yesterday we had a large Communion Service in a field. Almost the whole Battalion was present, as we were back six or seven miles from the firing line. It was drawn up in the form of three sides of a square, and the fourth side consisted of the Officers, in the centre of whom was the Chaplain with a little table covered with

a white cloth. On the table was a single Communion Cup. The wine used was the red wine of the country. The bread was ration bread cut into little pieces. After the first portion of the Service was over, the Colonel took round the bread to every Officer and man, and the Chaplain and Major Shaw took the wine. To every man both were personally handed. We sang—‘The Lord is my Shepherd,’ ‘God is our Refuge and our Strength,’ ‘’Twas on that Night,’ and ‘O Thou my Soul;’ and ‘God save the King.’ I raised the tunes, ‘Wiltshire,’ ‘Stroudwater,’ ‘Communion;’ and then the tune I wanted for ‘O Thou my Soul’ was St. Paul, but I forgot how it went, so I just took another that I didn’t know the name of. I wonder if it would trouble you to send me my Psalter with the tunes? I sent it home from Falkirk in my long uniform box.

That afternoon the Battalion moved off to the trenches—a dusty march of several hours. My transport went by a different route. One gets plenty of practice in leading troops over unknown country by the map alone. Even in daylight one makes mistakes, and it is more difficult in the

darkness. I got my column to the point indicated in the map reference, and found the field I was to occupy in possession of another unit's transport. This is what is known in the army as 'bad Staff work.' So I had an argument with the lad who was answering for the Staff Captain, and gently pointed out that I was right; and after gaining my point we got into the field and took the loads off the weary animals. But the work was not yet done for the day and it was already 8.30 p.m. Coke had to be taken to the trenches, so we set off at 10 p.m., with 'four mule burdens of coke,' again over several miles of unknown road, and handed it over to some members of the Battalion quite near the trenches. We got back to our field at 2 a.m. this morning, and thus ended our Sabbath.

FRIDAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 1915.

The Battalion is having a rest in billets, but the billets available in this part are too small and there are not enough of them for all the troops in the district, so that things are very much crowded. Did I tell you about this billet of ours? It is the dirtiest we have yet been in. Four of

us (including Mr. MacGibbon) occupy one room and the family occupy the other. The family consists of a dirty old woman, and a daughter not much cleaner, and three lads. We have our meals in the room that we sleep in, and the family do their cooking in our room which has the only available stove! The Interpreter sleeps on the table and the rest of us on the floor, which is of stone and very uneven. There is a 'midden' just outside our windows, and we try to persuade the lads to do something to improve it, but the need for improvement does not appeal to them. Fortunately we have plenty of chloride of lime, and the eau-de-cologne you sent me has been very useful as the flies are legion. The horses and wagons are in a field behind, and the rain has made it very muddy.

III

FESTUBERT

Chevalier of the Legion of Honour

June—November, 1915



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Chevalier of the Legion of Honour

June—November, 1915

The dark hour came for the 6th Scottish Rifles on June 15th, and in it Captain Lusk found his great opportunity for the service which he was at all times so ready to give. It was for that service that the French Government afterwards honoured him, and for it he is remembered by many in the Regiment and beyond it.

His own account is contained in a letter to Colonel Kay, who was wounded at an early stage of the engagement:—

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1915.

DEAR COLONEL,

You must be wearying for news of the Battalion, and I seem to have allowed far too long a time to pass without reporting

to you what happened after you left. Truth to tell there has been little inclination to write to anyone these last days, and a real shrinking from having to tell all that must be told. First of all let me say how glad I am to hear that you are getting on well. Colville writes to me to say that you and Hill and he are at the same hospital. We have been anxious about Hill, but later news seems better. I don't know what news you have already had about things, so will you forgive me if I repeat things you already know?

It had been arranged that on the night of the fight Hamilton and I would bring up water in dixies to the reserve trenches after dark, and furnish a carrying party for this from the transport men.

I got together thirty men for this, took both watercarts down to the cross roads in the ruined village of ——*, filled the dixies there, and I reached the reserve trenches with the first lot about 10.45 p.m. How I wished then that we had come earlier, but we had purposely come about one hour later than the usual time. I found the Doctor in his dug-out doing

* Festubert.

simply splendid work, and it was from him that I learned the state of affairs—how that so many of the Officers had been killed and so many more wounded. The Sergeant-Major was wrestling with an ammunition party, and they were dropping shells pretty thickly round us.

I arranged with Hamilton that he would go back with the transport and its carrying party, and I would go on and see what I could do to help. It took some time to reach the fire trench, as the communication trench was very crowded with stretcher-cases coming back and wounded being helped back on other men's shoulders, and as you know well, it is very narrow.

I got up at last and found the 8th Liverpool Regiment holding the fire trench, with what was left of our men dotted in between them. I made my way along, asking for Officers of the 6th, but for a long time there was not one to be found. I had passed Stewart on the way going out wounded, but he didn't seem to be badly hit. Then at length I found Ralston and later Campbell and Hay. They seemed to be quite certain that there were no other Officers left except Wishart, who had been

badly wounded. A great many of our wounded men were being taken out, and it was a difficult business in so narrow a trench. In some parts stretchers were of little use, and waterproof sheets had to be used instead. We soon came upon Wishart being carried along on a sheet. His face was very pale; I gave him a drink from my water bottle, but I scarcely think he knew me. About 3 a.m. I got the reserve trench on the telephone, and tried to get somebody on the Brigade Staff to speak, but there was no one there except a Major of the Liverpool Regiment, who told me that the Brigade had sent a message that the 6th Scottish Rifles and the 'King's Own' were to reform in the reserve trenches, and were to move out *via* M 6.

It took some time to get them all collected. I started down the communication trench. Ralston led the way and they went in sections, and I waited until everyone I could find had gone,—all except two wounded men whom I left in charge of a Sergeant and two stretcher-bearers, who brought them out in course of time.

It was about 5 a.m. when I reached the

reserve trenches. There I found a Brigade message—this time a written one—waiting for me. It bore the hour 4.37 a.m. 16/6/15, and was as follows—‘As many Officers and men of your Battalion as can be collected should be taken back to Le T——,* where arrangements are being made for food and rest A.A.A. As two Battalions are remaining as trench garrison, you should not crowd trenches by waiting A.A.A. As soon as small parties are collected they should start at once for Le T——.’ *

The Doctor was still sitting in his dug-out with the blood stains round about him, in the quiet calmness that has been his strength these days. What a night he had had, and what news of the fate of his friends he had had to listen to in the midst of the strain of that night’s work! The shells had not been few, and some had struck the back of his dug-out, but through it all his devotion to duty was beyond all praise.

He had a specially good word to say for the two stretcher-bearers Craig and Hannah, who had brought out Erskine Hill in

* Le Touret.

the afternoon of the 15th. It had been specially difficult work. Sergeant Hillhouse of 'B' Company died beside the 'aid post,' and we buried him near by. By Companies we marched down the road towards Fes——* and the last was clear by 6 a.m.

I went back to the Brigade Headquarters and saw the General and some of his staff and told him as much as I had by this time been able to gather of what had happened in the attack.

The Battalion had done superbly! They did what was required of them; they took what they were told to take; and tried hard to hold it alone. . . . At last an order came to withdraw; it came from the right, but from whom no one knows. Then they came back—all that was left of them.

'A' Company who went over the parapet first have had the heaviest losses, Murray, Macdonald and Kennedy all killed, McLean's nerves completely shattered, and every Sergeant gone save Downie.

Of the other Companies, Brown killed, J. H. Keith twice buried in shell holes and dug out with shattered nerves, and Capes

* Festubert.

in much the same condition. Poor Pat Keith killed, Stewart, Brown and Logan all wounded. Young J. B. Wilson killed, Wishart very badly hit, died later, and Major MacKenzie wounded.

Poor Major Shaw! it is so sad about him, Ralston bound up his first wound on the chin, and still he cheered on the men, and got well forward when he was shot dead. Ralston succeeded in getting one of his guns planted right in the German lines, when it was put out of action by shell fire. His other gun under Sergeant Thompson got into difficulties at a ditch, and was splendidly led on by J. B. Wilson, who came across it after being cut off from his own men. Wilson did splendidly in taking that gun forward till he was shot dead. Sergeant Thompson was also killed, and the gun is reported to have been smashed by bombs.

In a field oposite the Transport lines the men were fed and rested, and that same morning before noonday the Companies held their roll-call. Out of the total number of Officers and men who went into the trenches on Sunday night, 13/14th June, exactly half answered their names.

That same afternoon orders came for the Battalion to move back to the same billets at Le C—— M——* as had been occupied before the fight. That was Wednesday afternoon.

What haunted me most was the thought of those still lying out in front. Another attack had been ordered for Wednesday night, and that made a search party out of the question for that night. The attack took place with much the same result as on Tuesday night. The Battalion that attacked was cut to pieces like one man. On Thursday afternoon I asked permission from the Brigade to take up a party of volunteers to try to bring in wounded. Leave was granted and there was no lack of willing men to go. We set out in the early evening and Ralston and Hay came too. Fifty men had been selected, *i.e.*, ten from each Company and ten from Transport, &c.

On the way we stopped at Brigade Headquarters to ask permission for Hay to go, and the General said that before going down to the trenches we must present his compliments to the Brigadier-General of the Brigade in occupation of

* Le Cornet Malo.

the trenches, and get his sanction for the effort. On we went and halted at the moated farm and saw the General. He said we might try if we liked, but that an attack had been ordered for 9.30 that night and another for 3 a.m., preceded by bombardment, and that we must be clear of trenches before the second one began, and in any case we must see the Commanding Officers of the Battalions holding the trenches, to be sure that we did not interfere with any of their arrangements. So on we went to the reserve trenches, and there we saw the Commanding Officers of the two Battalions in the fire trench. They were not encouraging. They had ration parties in the communication trenches and water parties, and a certain amount of ammunition had to be taken up before the second attack began. The first attack was said to be going on at the moment, and there was certainly a good deal of rifle fire, but they could get no news of its progress as the wires were cut. Three working parties had already been told off by them to go out between the first and second attack, should the first prove unsuccessful (as they seemed to think it would), and

bridge the ditches, &c., preparatory to the second show, and it was expected that these parties would do all they could to bring in wounded.

All this was most unsatisfactory. Everything seemed against us. Ralston and Hay and I went up the communication trench a short way, and we then very reluctantly decided that we must abandon the attempt. It was hard to have to give up. Our hope of being able to bring in any of our own men had never been very strong, as we knew only too well that the same front as the Battalion had attacked over had yet again been swept with fire in the attack that had followed ours on the next night. But faint though the hope was, no stone must be left unturned to try to realize it, and now even that last hope was taken away. They lie where they fell.

And yet in the midst of the bitterness and the sadness one cannot keep back the feeling of pride that it should be so with our comrades.

We carried the packs of the Battalion back to the transport that we had brought with us, and after a long march reached our billets again about 5 a.m. Our mis-

sion had been unfulfilled but we had tried. I thanked the men on your behalf, Sir, for coming.

Next day General Hibbert came to see us, and got a description of what had happened—chiefly from Ralston, Hay and Campbell.

By this time Graham had returned from hospital and had taken command. He has done splendidly since, and has made every effort to pull what was left of the Battalion together, and to keep them from thinking that all further need for effort was over for them.

General Hibbert inspected the Battalion on Saturday, 19th, and Major-General Sir R. Bannatine-Allason on Monday, 21st. They both thanked the Regiment for the good work they had done. They deeply regretted the very heavy losses, and said that although the attack by the Battalion had not been in the end entirely successful, yet it had had an important influence on the operations at other portions of the Allies' lines.

But the work was not yet finished, there can be no stopping, and we must refit and 'carry on.'

I am trying to carry out the duties of acting Adjutant. J. C. Wilson has re-reported for duty with the Battalion till further instructions from the Royal Flying Corps, and we are glad of his help.

On Tuesday, 22nd, we moved forward again to what the Division called an 'intermediate position,' and on Monday a working party of 200 men with full proportion of Officers was called for.

We just managed to furnish this with the equipment available and sent all four Officers with it. It returned at about 4.30 a.m. in safety.

To-day, Thursday, 20th, a message has come that the Brigade is to be prepared to move to a new area about 8 p.m.

Tuesday night, 29th.—I shall carry on the tale from where I left off.

It was the greatest possible satisfaction to the Battalion to learn that the new area was very close indeed to the district it last served in under its old Division. Nothing could be more grateful to all of us, than to leave the places that had been associated with so much unhappiness and misfortune,

and return to places that had brighter memories for us.

We moved by night march to a large town and billeted in a factory near a river, as we had done once before. Next day we moved again, this time to a deserted village with a much battered church. We knew the village well by name, but had never before been billeted in its streets. Here we stayed till Sunday morning, when a message came that C.O. and Adjutant were to report to Headquarters 23rd Infantry Brigade along with Brigade Major of 154th Brigade, to make arrangements for taking over a section of trenches that night. Strange that eventful days should almost always be Sundays! Our strength for the firing line is a C.O.; Acting Adjutant; 5 Subalterns and 330 other ranks. We took over the section from a Regular Battalion on Sunday night, and carried out the relief (including three posts) in less than an hour.

The trenches are good ones and the front is quiet. We shall probably do six days and perhaps nine days. They can tell us very little about it, but we are getting on famously. Two new Vickers

Machine Guns were issued to us, and they are very light and a great improvement on the older pattern.

We hold a section to the right of the one we occupied when Lawrie was killed. Trench headquarters is in a house that has had all the roof tiles knocked off, and, in spite of some well meaning tarpaulins spread on the rafters, it leaks when it rains. Hamilton is doing the work of Transport Officer as well as his own work, and comes up to trenches cheerily every night as of old. I have been trying to write up the Adjutant's War Diary, but know that I cannot do justice to the tale of that attack.

The Battalion has been re-organized as far as was considered necessary, and a good many promotions among N.C.O's have been given effect to. Just now it is doing duty in the trenches as two Companies under Campbell and Hay, with Ralston as Machine Gun Officer.

It is rumoured that a draft of Officers is on the way out to us, but of this we have no official intimation.

The men are quite cheerful, and seem

to be rapidly getting over the ill effects of their experiences of the 15th.

We know that you have crossed the Channel, and so I shall send this to your own home. I do hope the shoulder is not giving you much pain. Best wishes for a good recovery.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

J. LUSK.

A few extracts from letters to his Mother will reveal in a more intimate way what he experienced on the night of the 15th, and during the strenuous days which followed it. The first of them illustrates his readiness for the post of greatest danger, and the chivalry of his devotion to his friends:—

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1915.

When I was up in the trenches last night, I asked the Colonel if he would let me take John's place in 'A' Company, as the Quartermaster had said he would be quite willing to do his own work and the work of the Transport Section if required. . . . But the Colonel would not let me do it,

and the Adjutant was of the same opinion, so I had to come back again.

THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1915.

My news is not so good to-night. The Battalion attacked the enemy on Tuesday night and did splendidly, but our losses have been very heavy indeed. . . . A party is going up to-night to try to get some of our wounded back. I am very well, but these days have been trying ones. God has helped me wonderfully at every turn of the way, and will still lead on.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 18, 1915.

I am quite well though tired. I was out all night with a party at the trenches, but we all got back safely.

What is left of the Battalion is being re-organized. Captain Graham is in command meantime, and I come next, and so shall act as Adjutant.

SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1915.

Will you please excuse only short hurried notes just now? There is a tremendous lot of work to be done in connection with the recent fight. Reports of all sorts

are being called for and are all wanted at once. I am acting Adjutant and must do all I can. I don't know when I shall be able to give you any description of what took place on Tuesday night, but I shall do so as soon as I can.

They have taken us back a bit to rest and re-fit, and will likely re-inforce us from the 2nd/6th Battalion at home. We shall need a good many Officers and men, and we don't know whether they may still require us,—short though we are of both. I had a good sleep last night and am quite well though rather tired out. The weather is very good, and we have much to be thankful for. I haven't even written to the Colonel yet to tell him what happened to his Battalion after he left it, but I must try to do so to-day if I can. . . . I am being greatly helped.

SABBATH, JUNE 20, 1915.

The events of the last week are uppermost in our minds, and seem to overshadow everything else. By this morning probably, the friends of those whose lives have been lost will get the letters telling them of it, and it will be sad news for

them. . . . I cannot feel thankful enough that John got his slight hit before that fateful charge on Tuesday evening.

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 1915.

We are getting on as well as we can, and the men are resting. Our Divisional General inspected us this morning, and thanked what was left of the Regiment for what they had done.

TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 1915.

I haven't got a minute to spare to-day to write to you properly. We are moving to new billets in the afternoon, and I have to make all billeting arrangements as well as do the Adjutant's work, but I am getting through it. Fortunately the weather is still good.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 1915.

We are carrying on very short indeed of Officers, and are trying to make the best of it. . . . It is only too true that young Jack Wilson has been killed. He did splendidly in the attack, and his father and sister have every reason to be proud of him. I shall write to Mr. Wilson when

I can get a spell to do it properly. I must be off to attend a Court Martial several miles away.

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1915.

They are moving us again by night march to-night to a new area, and we don't know what they are going to do with us. There is a good deal of work involved in re-organizing a Battalion that has lost so heavily, and we can only do it up to the capacity of the personnel we have got left. They do not appear to consider it necessary to take us really far back to do this, as we had four Officers (all we could spare) and 200 men out working near the trenches last night.

SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 27, 1915.

I am sorry I missed our Church Parade this morning. We got a message early that we were to go to a place to make arrangements for taking over a section of trenches to-night, so Captain Graham and I went and made the necessary arrangements.

We feel so glad that they have taken us away from the section of trenches that has

such unhappy associations. Graham and I went into the trenches this morning to see the section that we are taking over to-night. They are well made, and are quite close to the section we held many weeks ago under our last Division that we liked so well. Things are quite quiet, and there is no suggestion of anything more than just the holding of the line. This we are very thankful for.

In the Colonel's letter to Captain Lusk in reply to the long letter given above, the following sentence occurs:—‘I want to thank you, my dear fellow, for the absolutely splendid way in which you took hold of things under very, very trying circumstances. The Regiment will never forget it.’

The mother of one of the fallen Officers wrote to Mrs. Lusk on June 29th:—

‘Your dear son is still spared to be a comfort and help to others, and he so bravely led the party who tried to find our dead and wounded, but alas! they had fallen, I fear, within the German lines. It *would* have brought comfort to know that our dear son was buried by loving hands,

and that they knew his grave, and I'm sure they *nobly* tried to reach the place. I read yesterday a letter from one of the men (spared, though his brother is "missing"); he said "Our Captain wept, I think, when the General told him it would be certain death to venture." I felt sure this was your dear son. God bless him.'

The official statement of the matter is found in the Divisional Orders which mention the award as being 'for gallantry displayed at Rue d'Ouvert on 15th June, 1915; when a large number of Officers had been killed he voluntarily proceeded to the firing line, took command of what was left of the Battalion and successfully brought the troops out of action.'

Captain Lusk was gazetted Adjutant of the Battalion shortly after the Battle of Festubert, and continued to act in that capacity to the end. During Major Graham's absence on leave, he acted as Commanding Officer as well.

The Battalion was moved south to the neighbourhood of Albert and the Somme* about the end of July:—

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 23, 1915.

I missed sending you a letter yesterday. I had to go off on my horse a distance of

* They occupied lines near Aveluy and Authuille.

some six miles or so to find new billets for the Battalion. This work is usually done by the Senior Major and the Interpreter, but as the Interpreter is on leave and the Major is killed, I did it.

We are being relieved in our Posts tonight by an English Regular Regiment and are going back six or seven miles by route march. We expect to set out from here at about 10 p.m. and should reach our new Billets in about two hours or so by night march.

The method of allotting billets to a Battalion is as follows. The Brigade gives each Battalion under it a certain area on the map, and the Battalion Billeting Officers go to that area in advance as I did yesterday, and select the most suitable farms or houses or other buildings, and chalk the name of the Regiment on the doors, and tell the inhabitants that troops will occupy their premises on a certain day. When the Battalion leaves these billets the owners are given a certificate with the number of Officers and men accommodated, signed by the Commanding Officer; this is counter-signed by the Mayor of the district, and later on the

owner receives payment at a fixed rate for Officer or man.

I left here at about 2 p.m. and returned at about 7 p.m. pretty tired.

This move of ours to-night is a part of a greater move. Our whole Division is being taken by a train journey sometime next week to a part of the line a great many miles further South. This will probably mean helping the French with a portion of their line.

So that the next week or so should be a change of surroundings for us all. A train journey after a spell of four months without ever seeing one will be rather strange.

FRIDAY MORNING, JULY 30, 1915.

We arrived at the station of de-training about 5 p.m. on Wednesday, after a railway journey that we all enjoyed. It was a great change for all of us, and the country was looking at its best. From the station we had to march for about six miles to a billeting area where we are now. The headquarters is in a very nice old French Château, owned by an old lady, but ruled by her manservant. The house

has not been properly cared for and is falling to pieces, but there is a beautiful garden and beautiful trees round it. The orchards in this country abound in fruits—apples, pears, plums and peaches—but chiefly apples and pears. Of course nothing is ripe yet. There is a pond literally covered with water-lilies and green stuff, and alive with green frogs with black spots on them. If you run your stick along the edge of the pond a dozen of them will jump into the water. We have had the luxury of beds with sheets on them these last two nights. I have not experienced that all the time we have been in this country, and that is over four months now. We leave this place this evening immediately after an inspection by our Army Commander, and that takes place at 4 p.m. to-day. We go to a forward area, and spend the night in Billets there (it is about six miles away from here), and then on Saturday night we take over our portion of the trench line from the French Army. Our Battalion is just immediately behind the front line in support of other Battalions. We shall be in 'dug-outs' probably for a week or ten days, I expect, and just a few hundred

yards behind the front line. Since Graham left I command the Battalion, and this taking over from the French Army is a little more difficult to arrange than usual, and of course the country is new to all of us. It is much more pleasant country to look at than the country we have left. It is more hilly and much more closely wooded. The harvest is getting ripe, and in some parts is cut already. Old men and boys do the reaping of it, and in some cases, where even these are not available, soldiers are set to do it.

SABBATH EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1915.

On Wednesday night we moved away from our nice Château at 10.30 p.m., and at 1.30 a.m. reached the village where we were to stay the night. The moon was good, and the march was a good one of about seven miles or so. At 2.15 that morning I lay down on the top of a bed with just my boots and jacket off, and slept till 6 a.m. Then I got up and shaved, and drank a cup of cocoa that my servant made, and was in the saddle again by 7 a.m., and rode about five miles to the headquarters of a French General in

a Château. Officers Commanding Battalions were ordered to go there at 8 a.m., and we were provided with French guides who could speak English, and went over the trenches that our Battalions were to take over on Saturday night. This we did, and were much pleased with the construction of them and the general conditions of everything; so last night we marched off from our Billets in the village to the trenches, and we are here now. Our Battalion is not actually in the front line just now, but is in 'dug-outs' just behind the first line. It is in a wood, and is so picturesque in places that one would never connect it with war, were it not for occasional shells that come over our heads.

MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 1915.

I am well, and busy all day with many varied things. I am acting just now both as Commanding Officer and Adjutant, but we are getting on nicely. We are a few hundreds of yards behind the front line just now, and, beyond a little shelling now and again, we are very quiet.

We are living in a wood with high trees

and undulating ground, and the French Army, who have just vacated the place have constructed most elaborate shelters from shell-fire. They are much more palatial places than any 'dug-outs' we have seen or made elsewhere. They go so deep down into the ground, or are built up with such thick sides and roofs, that they are considered quite safe things to be in, even if they do get a direct hit upon them with a big shell. We are going to make application for leave for other two Officers. . . . Then perhaps it will be my turn to come. Yes, I am waiting till all the others have had leave, as I would rather be the last to go.

SABBATH NIGHT, SEPT. 19, 1915.

To-day has been my birthday and I am getting very old, but I don't feel it, so it doesn't matter, and the best thought is that we grow old all together. And I have more to be thankful for than most. Our mails have been delayed one day, and that has had this result, that to-day's mail brought me no fewer than eight letters, and six of these were partly written for my birthday, and if the mails had not been

delayed I would likely have had all these birthday letters one day too soon! So that I am quite content to see a purpose in all that concerns me, and I am especially rich in real friends.

SAME DATE.

I am thirty-seven to-day. . . . but I don't feel old, and pray that I may be given more strength to give more and do more, and to keep nothing back that should be *given*.

There is an inspiration in giving, and in being spent for the greatest things, that knows no limits and never knows what it is to give too much.

He was disappointed several times of the leave which he was looking forward to, but he never grumbled. When it came at last in October it was spent chiefly in seeing his many friends and especially the relatives of his comrades in the Battalion. One friend has seen in this a new instance of the fact that he 'always thought first of others.'

It was in November that the unlooked for honour came to Captain Lusk:—

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1915.

I have got a little piece of news for you

to-night that will cheer you. Intimation came to us this morning that a French decoration was to be given to your first-born son. It is called 'Chevalier, 5th Class, Legion of Honour.' I don't know what it is for, but someone—I don't know who—has been so kind as to recommend me for it, and it is to be given to-morrow, Sabbath, by the Commander of the Third Army at a little village behind the lines.

I don't know what there has been in the work of each day that has seemed to those in authority to be worthy of some mark of approval. . . . It has come as a complete surprise to us all, and I try to say that it is an honour more to the Battalion than to me. . . . It is exactly one year to-day since I took up my duties as Staff Captain of the Scottish Rifle Brigade at Falkirk.

NOVEMBER 9, 1915.

Saturday night was a busy one; I think I only got a few hours' sleep altogether. We were to be relieved in trenches on Sabbath morning. It was a day sooner than we had expected, and there were many arrangements to make, besides the ordin-

ary routine-work of messages and telephones and counter-messages. I got up before 6 to lead a working party up to the front trench, and when I had done that I lay down again for less than an hour; then got up and washed and shaved, for this was a great day for my Mother and my Sister, and through them for me! The orders for the relief reached us at 8 a.m., and I had much arranging to do in the hour that followed before I had to be off on my errand. I got something to eat, put on a pair of cleaner boots, and tried to take at least some of the mud from my clothes. My grey mare was waiting for me in the wood, and I rode about three miles back to Hamilton's billet in his little village. I met him in the middle of the street. He had just heard about it the night before, and was *very* kind about it and extremely pleased. He is *such* a keen soldier. I took off my web equipment, and borrowed his leather cross-belts, which he always keeps polished to the last degree, and dug out my new glengarry from my valise that was in his keeping what time we were in the trenches.

A motor-bus had been arranged for the

rest of the journey; it was one of the old London Omnibus Company's ones, painted khaki and with its side windows boarded up. There are lots of them used here for taking troops about hurriedly. This took me back another five or six miles, and by 11 a.m. we had reached a little village where there was a charming old French Château, that was being used as the Headquarters of a certain 'Division'—a *Regular* Division. In front of the Château was a beautiful park with trees covered with autumn leaves. It was a perfect winter day. The sun shone, and opposite the centre of the Château at the other side of the park stood a great gateway with high pillars and a great gate. A parade ground was marked off in this park, and a certain Regiment of Regulars was drawn up to form three sides of a square. When every one was in his place the order was given 'Fix Bayonets,' and like one man they flashed in the sun-light. There was a little table at the fourth side of the square with a coloured rug laid over it. In the centre of the square nine Officers and about thirty Non-Commisioned Officers and men stood to attention in line.

General Sir E. H. H. Allenby, K.C.B., Commanding the Third Army, accompanied by his Staff and several French Officers in blue and gold, came to the little table. The Commander of the Troops gave the command 'GENERAL SALUTE, PRESENT ARMS,' and they did it *well*, while the Army Commander stood at the salute. One by one names were called by the Chief of his Staff, and each one in the centre row came forward and saluted. No word was spoken save this,—'Légion d'Honneur, Chevalier,—I congratulate you.' Each again saluted in silence and withdrew to the centre line, with something in his hand. Then to the other ranks was handed either 'Médaille Militaire' or 'Croix de Guerre.' Again the band in rear of the troops played 'The Marseillaise,' while all stood at the salute. That was all. The troops marched off the ground, the centre row fell out, and it was over. No speech. The Army is not given to making speeches; and in the circumstances that made the setting, it seemed entirely fitting that it should be so, for we could still hear the guns in the distance. I went back to the trenches,



but why I was one of those nine I do not know or understand.

SAME DATE.

Everyone here has been so kind about my French decoration. I feel quite ashamed that such a thing should have come to me, when so many others round me have done so well. I don't understand it.

The star is of white and green enamel and the ribbon is scarlet silk.

It is exactly seven years yesterday since I joined this Battalion.

In two letters to friends, written some weeks later, the following passages occur :—

There are many in the Battalion who have deserved marks of approval for service much more than I, and in particular those who have made the supreme sacrifice. But their Honour is greater than anything that man can give.

I went back to the trenches, and the Château with its park, its gates, its trees

with autumn leaves, its well-dressed regiment with fixed and shining bayonets, its Generals in red and blue and gold, disappeared like a happy dream, and it was back to mud and duty.

But there is a deep down satisfaction in being in the front line that a man would not give up for much that the world holds dear.

I am proud of that Cross, and proud to wear its scarlet ribbon on my jacket, but there are honours greater far than that, and to these I have not attained. I have not made the great sacrifice, nor have I even suffered wounds in this fight, and these need no marks of man's approval.

Colonel Kay wrote to Mrs. Lusk under date November 6th as follows:—

‘ I am asking James to enclose this with his to-day's letter to you. just to say how charmed and delighted we all are that he has been selected to have the *Légion d'Honneur* conferred upon him The award brings great honour on him and on the Regiment, and the fact that he has been chosen as, I believe, the only Officer

in the Brigade* to receive the Cross, shows that those in high places know and recognize what splendid service he has done not only at Festubert, but before and since. In his own good modest way he insists that it is a recognition to the Regiment, but I want specially to say that that is nonsense. It is an absolutely personal award for gallant and strenuous service. . . . I can never thank him sufficiently for all he has done and is doing, and my earnest prayer is that God may restore him to you and all who love him in due time, and that he may be long spared to enjoy the honours he is so worthily earning.'

* In Routine Order No. 375 by G.O.C. 51st (Highland) Division, dated Thursday, 11th November, 1915, under 'Honours and Rewards,' the name of Captain Lusk appears as the only officer in the Division decorated then.

IV

THE LAST WEEKS

November & December, 1915

IV

THE LAST WEEKS

November and December, 1915

One of the last weeks of Captain Lusk's life was a specially busy one. He was summoned to take the place of the Brigade Major, while the latter was absent on leave. Before the letters which describe this work there are two or three others which are of special interest:—

SABBATH NIGHT, NOV. 14, 1915.

We had Service to-day in a sort of Hall in one of the wings of the Château of this village. Mr. Coutts officiated and did very well indeed, and we all like him.

Fortunately a piano was available and I played it. We sang 'God is our Refuge' to Stroudwater, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' to Wiltshire, and 'Fight the good

Fight ' to the tune that is not in the Hymnary.

In the evening again we had another more informal Service, at which I again played; everyone enjoyed both Services. Two biscuit boxes served as a piano stool!

SAME DATE (*to his Sister*).

There is a phrase of John Kelman's about this war that I specially like to think of. It speaks of one who strives to 'carry a sword across the barriers of death clean and bright.' Many and many a one has done it and done it to the uttermost in this fight, and the rest of us, halting and stumbling, try to follow in their train.

And what helps me most is just your love. It keeps *high* the ideals of service and sacrifice, and makes the counting of all cost as a forgotten thing.

SATURDAY NIGHT, NOV. 20, 1915.

You say the ground is white with snow. We have had snow too. The night we marched off from billets to trenches (about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles), the snow was thick on the ground, and a mist came down, and it was very cold. Did I tell you that I thought

it would have made a good picture for an artist to paint? At a bend in the road you could see a long column of troops—only half its former length—trudging slowly along, every man laden like a pack animal, with fur coat, waterproof sheet, blanket, pack, equipment, &c., and of course his rifle and bayonet and 120 rounds of ammunition. The Colonel and I rode at the head of the column, and Major Graham and the Medical Officer at the rear.

SATURDAY MORNING, DEC. 4, 1915.

They called for me this afternoon to come to Brigade Headquarters to take the place of the Brigade Major, who has gone on leave for a week—and so I find myself once more in a Brigade Office with plenty of work to do. But it is responsible work, and the Brigade takes over trenches on Sabbath, so I have to make all arrangements for the move of the different Battalions.

SAME DATE.

I am in a post of much increased responsibility just now for about a week, and I need great help, but I am *getting* this help. I feel it in no uncertain way.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, DEC. 8, 1915.

To-day has not been quite such a hustle as yesterday was, but it has been very full since 8 a.m. this morning—or rather yesterday morning! I am very well and getting through it wonderfully; the Brigade Major will probably return on Thursday or Friday. A Brigade Headquarters is a busy place on Service, and fifty different things seem to call for attention at once sometimes. There are telephones to the different Battalions in the trenches, and a telephone to the Divisional Headquarters and to Artillery Batteries and Royal Engineers. Then besides that, Officers come in to ask for instructions for this, that and the other thing. But I have been wonderfully helped from day to day. The trenches are pretty bad with mud and water, and to-day and to-night it has been raining, and they will be worse to-morrow.

SABBATH NIGHT, DEC. 12, 1915.

I am once more at the Headquarters billet of the 6th Scottish Rifles after a most strenuous ten days as Acting Brigade Major. It has been a busy time. Each day has been as full as days can be from

8 a.m. till after midnight—then six hours sleep and at it again; but I am perfectly well, and with a good sleep I shall be all right again. I am so glad I have been able to do it, though it has been a good handful for me. Still the General seemed pleased with the manner in which the work had been done, and I was thankful for that. . . . I now feel as if I would have an easier time. One of the best ways to find how light a burden is—is to carry a heavier one for some time!

Captain Lusk's impression that 'the General seemed pleased' with his work is confirmed by a letter, written after his death to his Mother, by Brigadier-General G. L. G. Edwards, 154th Infantry Brigade:—

'I am writing a few lines to tell you how deeply I condole with you and your family in the irreparable loss you have sustained. A short time ago when the Brigade Major was on leave, your son took over his duties, and I was then able to personally appreciate his many good qualities and devotion to duty. He is a very great loss to his Regiment and to the

Service, and his sad end is deeply felt by all in the Brigade who knew him.'

An Illuminated Address of congratulation upon his honour was drawn up by the Directors, Members of the Staff and representative Foremen at the Dalzell Iron and Steel Works, and sent to his Mother for safe keeping. Previously one of his colleagues there had written to Mrs. Lusk,— 'It would do your heart good to hear the remarks made by everyone at the Works, and everyone seems anxious that you should know how glad they are.' The Address pleased Captain Lusk very much, as the following letter will show:—

SABBATH NIGHT, DEC. 19, 1915.

Thank you very much for your letter to-day telling me of this magnificent Illuminated Address that has come to you from the Works. It is just exceedingly kind of them, and is a great deal more than I deserve. You have described it most fully even to the measurements of the frame both inside and outside, as well as all that is inscribed upon it. It is a great work of art, and I think I can guess the name of the man who did the drawing part of it. He is on the Staff of the

Drawing Office and draws very well indeed, and so when I write to the Works about it I must write a special note to him. It is just exceedingly kind of everyone there to think of the idea, and I do greatly appreciate their kindness. It shows a great feeling of friendliness that I am very proud of. The signatures will be most interesting. I wonder whose idea it was to do it? . . .

Christmas will soon be here. We go into trenches again on Tuesday, so shall likely be there on that day.

We had Service to-day. Our own Chaplain is on leave, and the Service was taken for us by a Church of England Chaplain, who took our Form of Service very well indeed. It was good of him to do it. We sang 'Lord, bless and pity us,' and 'I'm not ashamed,' and 'Fight the good Fight.'

There is not a little pathos about the letters of the last days of all:—

(To the Rev. James MacGibbon, C.F.)

I fear your thoughts of me must be hard ones, and there is ample reason. I have been waiting, and still waiting, for a quiet

hour in which to answer your letter to me. It has not been by any means a question of forgetting—for I could not forget that—but merely a question of putting off the time of writing, till I could find a time of comparative quiet to answer you as your letter demands to be answered.

I thank you for it very warmly indeed—more warmly than I can say on paper. . . .

The Honour that has come to me was wholly unexpected, and I take it as being meant for the Battalion, more than for me personally. The mere accident of seniority among those who were left at the end of the fight, does not in itself carry any claim to notice. My poor part in that night's happenings was a very small one. I have not made the great sacrifice, nor have I even suffered wounds in this great cause. To those who have given all there was to give—even life itself—belongs that Honour. Theirs is the Honour that no man can give. It is alone in its greatness, and of man's approval it needs no mark or sign. God marks their resting place, for He alone can.

Our thoughts go out towards those at home whose patience and self-sacrifice is

past telling in its greatness. They have given of their dearest and their best, and to that Legion of those whom we Honour do they most assuredly belong.

God knows how little I deserve of this.

I have a book wrapped in my haversack that I never tire of reading, though I have but seldom opened it here—to my loss. It is F.W.H. Myers' *St. Paul*. No doubt you know it. It has given strength many a time.

‘Nay but Thou knowest us, Lord Christ,
Thou knowest,
Well Thou rememberest our feeble
frame,
Thou canst conceive our highest and our
lowest,
Pulses of nobleness and aches of
shame.

‘Therefore have pity!—not that we ac-
cuse Thee,
Curse Thee and die, and charge Thee
with our woe:
Not through Thy fault. O Holy One,
we lose Thee,
Nay, but our own,—yet hast Thou
made us so!

‘Then, though our foul and limitless
transgression

Grows with our growing, with our
breath began,
Raise Thou the arms of endless inter-
cession,
Jesus, divinest when Thou most art
man!’

... I have always looked forward to the days when you would be able to take our services for us, and missed them when they were impossible. The passion of self-sacrifice, the passion of St. Paul as of his Christ, makes strong appeal, and I always found that note in your words to us, and I loved it. It has no limits; it counts no cost.

I miss you now—we all do. God grant we may meet again.

One wonders how long it still must last. There is something written by George Dawson that I like for these days. It is this:—

‘Grant unto us, Almighty God, that when our vision fails and our understanding is darkened, when the ways of life seem hard and the brightness of life is gone—to us grant the wisdom that deepens faith when the sight is dim, and enlarges trust when the understanding is

not clear. And whensoever Thy ways in nature or in the soul are hard to be understood, then may our quiet confidence, our patient trust, our loving faith in Thee be great; and as children, knowing that we are loved, cared for, guarded, kept, may we with a quiet mind at all times put our trust in the unseen God. So may we face *life without fear and death without fainting.*'

You will, I hope, forgive this much quotation. They are taken out of my treasures, and I like to share them with those I care for.

We have been out of the trenches for four days and are going in again to-morrow, so that it appears as if Christmas Day may find us there.

'Peace on earth, Goodwill among men' seems far away. But no doubt the strife of to-day will make the peace of to-morrow more lasting when it comes, as come it will.

TUESDAY NIGHT, DEC. 21, 1915.

I must send you a Christmas message of love to-night, as this may reach you on Christmas Day, or even later.

We came into trenches to-day, and shall likely be in for Christmas. Everyone is very cheerful. Friends at home have been specially kind in sending parcels out. The men seem to have loads of good things to eat, and are really very well provided for in that respect. Of course the mud and water that is everywhere does not form the most pleasant surroundings for enjoying these good things, but against all that there is the deep satisfaction in knowing that they are in the place where they can best do their duty, and that makes up for a great deal of discomfort.

SAME DATE.

We are all very cheerful, and Christmas Day will find us in the same frame of mind, I hope. Perhaps by next Christmas-time there will be lasting Peace and Goodwill. But that time is not yet.

SAME DATE.

We took over trenches again this evening—a day sooner than we expected. It has rained most of the day. The Colonel and Boyd and our Medical Officer and I, all rode over here from our rest billets this

afternoon. It rained and the roads are very muddy. Headquarters are occupying the same cottage as we had last time—the one that had its chimney carried away one day by a shell. But it will be safer this time! I suppose we shall be in for Christmas Day, but we are quite cheerful about it, and hope that the next Christmas will be spent under different circumstances, where Peace and Goodwill will be more in evidence than they are to-day. Peace will be more lasting when it comes, because of all the strife that has gone before it. I must send you Christmas messages by this letter, for the day will have come and perhaps gone when it reaches you. They are just the same old messages, but they go very deep down indeed. . . . And after Christmas and New Year's Day are over, and a few more weeks are past, I shall hope to come home again and actually *see* you.

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1915.

It is Christmas Eve once more, and we are still fighting mud and water and Germans. I hope that by next Christmas we shall be doing so no longer. We hope to

come out of the front line on Tuesday next, and have four days in Brigade Reserve, and then go back a good long way for a rest. So about New Year's Day we shall probably be on the move somewhere, and we hope that our long-looked-for rest of several weeks' duration may actually come to pass at last. But we shall see. I have just been wading through the mud and water of the trenches, and they are pretty bad, but we are all very cheerful, and try to make the best of our Christmas-time.

CHRISTMAS EVE (*to his Sister*).

It is Christmas Eve once more, and I have just come back from wading through the mud and water of front line trenches. I am tired and wet and dirty, and would that the men of strife would cease their noise and hear the Angels sing. But we must keep up our hearts. One gets sick to death sometimes of it all, but still it goes on and on, and we somehow live or dream through it. The night is clear with a bright moon, and it is dry at the moment. Pumps and mud and water and sandbags and chalk and bullets and more mud and bayonets and gum-boots and

shells and signal messages and artillery retaliation, seem sometimes to be all jumbled up, and dance before your eyes, and haunt you night and day. But at other times things are not so bad, and everybody is really very cheerful. . . . I've got nothing to give you this Christmas except my LOVE, from the midst of all the dancing muddle of mud and rain and other things.



EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

We are grateful to those who were beside James during his last days, for telling us about them, as well as for the loving care which they bestowed upon him, and the kind words of appreciation which they wrote.

Captain Campbell was one of the last to be with him. He writes:—

‘Poor Lusk was hit shortly after noon on Christmas Day. He had come up to the trenches* for his usual morning tour along with Major Graham. He had looked into Keith’s and my ‘dug-out,’ and then gone along into ‘A’ Company’s lines himself, the C.O. (Major Graham) having preceded him by a few minutes, when the trench-mortar came that laid him out.

‘He apparently did not hear or see the mortar coming. It was one of these in-

* This was near Thiepval.

fernal 'oil cans' (a cylindrical shaped object about two feet long and nine inches in diameter, filled with explosive); it landed on the parapet, and blew him against the corner of a communication trench which he was just passing. His ear was badly lacerated, and he was buried up to the shoulders in the falling débris (sand-bags, mud, &c.). It was only a matter of seconds before there was somebody there digging him out, which was done in five or ten minutes. The M.O., who was in the trenches at the time, bandaged him up, and he was carried out. I believe he was more or less conscious all the time, though he didn't appear to hear properly. Either the shock of the explosion, or his fall against the trench, broke the vertebrae of his neck. He passed away in Hospital at Amiens on the evening of the 28th December.

'Major Graham, the Padre and our M.O., myself and twenty men were present at his funeral which took place at 3.30 p.m. on the 30th. He is buried a mile and a half or so out of Amiens.

'I can appreciate how great must be the loss to you all. He was out here for one

thing, and that was to give his best for the job he was on, and he gave it all the time. He seemed to be everything the average fellow would like to be, but never is. He was the best of all.'

The Rev. Alfred Coutts, the Chaplain of the Battalion, wrote on the evening of Christmas Day:—

'Colonel Kay is home on leave this week, or I feel sure he would have wished to write to you himself, and express the profound sorrow of every Officer and man in the Battalion, that your son Captain Lusk was unfortunately wounded in the trenches this morning. He had not been long there before a German trench-mortar fired the 'oil can' as the soldiers call it, which exploded near the trench along which he was passing at the time. Happily the Medical Officer, Dr. Rawlins, was visiting the trenches, and was at your son's side within two minutes. He was very quickly got down to headquarters in the village, where he was further attended to, and the Doctor afterwards went to the Field Ambulance with him. There it was decided to send the patient to the Hospital

at Amiens without delay. He is wounded in the head—about the left ear—but he spoke to the Medical Officer quite calmly and rationally, and asked about the nature of his wound. As you can readily understand, he is suffering considerably from shock, but the Regimental Doctor and the Doctors of the Field Ambulance were unable to say more. A further medical examination would take place at Amiens, where they have X-ray apparatus. He bore the journey by motor to the Field Ambulance well, and we are all hoping to hear good news about him in a day or two. It has been a sad Christmas for his comrades here, for Captain Lusk was the honoured and beloved friend and brother of us all. Absolutely fearless at all times, he has greatly impressed us by his goodness. I shall miss very much his kindly presence—for he has been most helpful to me in my work.'

Captain Lusk's orderly, Private Isaac Devon, has told us that when he was hit, he was in the act of distributing cigarettes to the men in the trenches, and wishing them a Happy Christmas. The following

is from a letter which Private Devon wrote to his wife on the night of Christmas Day:—

‘It is with a very sore heart I write to you to-night. My dear Captain was wounded to-day very seriously, and I can’t tell how much yet. I am in Hospital just now with him; the doctors are operating on him with X-rays. . . . He is very done. I am so sorry for his poor Mother. This has been a bad Christmas for us. Oh, my poor Captain . . . he knew me, and knows I am near him. His wounds are mostly about the head. It was a trench mortar. He was buried and we had to dig him out. But I hope he pulls through; the doctor that dressed him at the trenches told me the shock is the worst; but I am afraid he is disfigured for life. I am waiting to hear how the operation goes on. I can’t tell you any more to-night, but I will be with him till he is sent to England if he is spared. I will give you full news to-morrow. . . . you know how I am upset about him.’

Kind letters came also from the Chaplains, the Doctor and the Sister in the

South Midland Casualty Clearing Station at Amiens; and he was at the last laid to rest by the Chaplain and some of his comrades in the Battalion which he had loved so well:—

‘ JANUARY 10, 1916.

‘ I shall never forget Christmas Day here, and your brother will always be linked in my memory with it. Sorrow and joy were intermingled during that day in a strange and wonderful way. I dressed as Father Christmas, and went round all the Wards with a present for each man. . . Then at the close of the day came the summons to see your brother. He had been put to bed and everything possible had been done to restore his circulation. He was very glad I had come. He was too weak to bear much, but I sat by his side for about three-quarters of an hour. The lights had been turned low, but I prayed quietly by his bedside, as is my custom when quietness is an absolute necessity. It was a sad close to Christmas Day, seated by the bedside of one who had been so badly hurt.

‘ Next morning he had brightened up considerably, and was very grateful that

I had seen him the previous night. He gave me his Mother's address, and was most anxious that I should not say too much about his injuries. There seemed a possibility of his recovery; my judgment was in suspense about that, but I was not without hope. Next day I brought a pot of white primulas. He wanted them put where he could see them. So I arranged them high enough where his eyes could always rest upon their white beauty. "These mean that Spring is coming," I said to him, but I did not know then how near Eternal Spring was to him. . . .

'He was most gracious and gentle in his ways, and so thankful for all that was done.'

EDWARD SKILTON, C.F.

'DECEMBER 29, 1915.

'I grieve very much to tell you that your son, Captain Lusk, took a turn for the worse last night. Captain Skilton, the Presbyterian Chaplain who has written to you informing you of the serious wounds your brave son received, would naturally have written to you now, but he is away at the present time. However, he

asked me to write and keep you informed about your son's condition in his absence. The turn for the worse which came last night was somewhat unexpected, in spite of the fact that we knew the serious nature of your son's condition.

'We hoped, however, that, please God, his life might be spared. But I grieve to have to tell you that He has ordered otherwise. After your son's collapse the end came very rapidly last night and he passed away. . . .

'If it is of the slightest comfort to you to know it, I should like you to feel that your son, after what he has undergone for his country's sake, spent his last days among friends, for his doctor and his nurse, Miss Bulman, quickly formed a great regard for him. Miss Bulman, I know, is writing to you herself, and I know how she has nursed your son with the greatest tenderness and care.'

BASIL ASTON

(Chaplain).

'DECEMBER 29, 1915.

'My heart is very sad as I sit down to write to you again. You will have heard

ere this that Captain Lusk passed away last evening,—so quietly he went, it was hard to realize that he had really left us, and there had been such great hopes of his recovery. After his first night with us the improvement seemed to be so steady, and yesterday he spoke so brightly and seemed so much more himself in every way. Several times he spoke of you, and his keen desire that you should not be told that he was seriously injured. He asked not to be moved from here till he was stronger, and remarked how he enjoyed the sounds of the children's voices playing in the Convent garden. Our Hospital is the other half of the Convent. He also asked to see his tunic, which I had brought up, and in examining it we admired the little "piece of ribbon." Then in his gallant way he remarked "Yes, they were very good to give me that; we had a rough time, but they certainly have been good to me." I could only feel how very much more we would do if we could, to save the lives of men like that.'

K. BULMAN

(Sister-in-Charge).

‘ JANUARY 5, 1916.

‘ He was quite conscious until breathing ceased. He never complained of any pain and I believe his suffering at the end was of very short duration. . . .

‘ In the short time I looked after him I appreciated his noble character, his patience and bravery, and was particularly struck by the gratitude he showed both to myself and the Sisters who looked after him. I attended his funeral and realized what a loss his brother Officers had sustained by his death.’

C. B. BAXTER

(Captain R.A.M.C.T.)

‘ DECEMBER 30, 1915.

‘ I have just returned from Amiens (which is about fourteen miles from here), where I had the sad duty of committing to its resting place the body of your departed son, our highly honoured and greatly loved Adjutant. From enquiries which I made, I learned that he passed away on the evening of the 28th inst. at 8.30. He is interred in the Cimetière de

St. Pierre, Amiens, and his grave is No. 4, Officers' Section. A burial party went down from the trenches with Major Graham, Captain Campbell, Dr. Rawlins and Monsieur Viel, the Brigade Interpreter. The scene was very pathetic, and everyone present was deeply moved. The Medical Officer who had your son under his special care at Amiens attended the funeral. He told me that Captain Lusk seemed at first to be doing quite as well as could be expected, and conversed freely with the doctors and nurses. The wound in the head though serious was not considered specially dangerous. There was some injury to the spine, however, which, I understand, caused paralysis. He suffered no pain all the doctors assured me, and was perfectly conscious and very bright to the last. All who nursed him in Hospital were much impressed by the personal charm and attractiveness of your son, and they were greatly touched by his constant gratitude for the smallest services rendered to him. His was a rare and beautiful character, and we all feel enriched by the gracious memories he has left behind him. His Christian life was

a testimony to the Master Whom he served, that none could fail to understand, and the men—one and all—felt that in Captain Lusk they knew a man who was a Christian “in deed and in truth.”

‘On the evening of the 28th December there was a sudden failure of strength. His breathing was affected. It all lasted but a few moments. “Quickly, Quickly” were the words he uttered, before he passed away.’

ALFRED COUTTS,
(*Chaplain, 6th Cameronians*).



In a special supplement to the *London Gazette*, issued on February 24, 1916, the official announcement appeared that the President of the French Republic, with the approval of His Majesty the King, had bestowed the *Croix de Chevalier* of the Legion of Honour on Captain Lusk. He was also mentioned in Despatches by the British Commander-in-Chief.



The tributes with which we conclude are all from Officers of the 6th Cameronians, except the first three which are from the widow of one Officer, and the bereaved parents of two others:—

‘I feel I have lost a true dear friend, one who brought comfort to *my* wounded heart, and whose precious letter and friendship I shall always cherish.’

R. K.

‘It was only on Christmas Morning that I received a beautiful letter from your son which greatly cheered my loneliness; this I know was characteristic of his ever mindful nature, and I feel proud to have had the honour of even being in his thoughts.

‘How vividly that last Sunday at Falkirk rises before me to-night, and his masterful touch on the organ that day I shall never forget.’

H. B. S.

‘You don’t know how he has endeared himself to me, first as Allan’s friend—then in the way he has looked after and helped my younger son since he went to France.

‘I have only seen Captain Lusk once, the evening you were all here, but I was never allowed to forget him, as few letters from both Allan and Vernon did not contain some reference to Captain Lusk. He seems to have been everybody’s friend. In a very sad letter which I received from Vernon to-night—written before Captain Lusk’s death—he says “I don’t know anyone who is so universally loved as Lusk is.”’

F. L.

‘It was with the greatest sorrow that I heard of your son’s death. He was a great friend of mine, and I always looked upon him as a man above other men. His high principles, up to which he acted to the letter, always made me describe him as “God’s good man.” I looked upon him as a type of ideal manhood far above those with whom he came in contact, and as a rich example of self-denial and uprightness which had a lasting influence upon his brother Officers.’

J. D.

‘I liked your son immensely. He and I were always the best of friends, and I

feel his loss very much indeed. He had done so well as Adjutant of the Battalion, and I know that no one will ever forget the part he played on the night of the 15th of June, when he took command of the Battalion at a critical moment and brought them out of action, and for which he was most justly rewarded.

‘It seems too sad to think that now he has gone, but it may be some slight consolation to you in your sorrow to know that your son died like a gallant Scottish gentleman, fighting for his country in what is surely a righteous cause.’

F. G. W. D.

‘As an old comrade of your very gallant son, I write to express my heartfelt sympathy with you in the loss of your dear boy, and our devoted Adjutant.

‘Nothing happens but by the permission of our Heavenly Father, so all is well with him gone Home. . . . It is given to few men even in this dreadful war to accomplish so much, and to perform their appointed tasks so worthily as has Captain Lusk, and it will surely help you to know how bravely and nobly he has kept

his word, and in passing carried his sword pure and spotless beyond the Veil.

‘To us of the 6th S.R. he has given a grand example of devotion to duty, and his influence has permeated the whole Corps. We could ill spare him, and probably from a regimental standpoint no greater loss could have befallen us. I had a letter from my son, who is with the Battalion, saying that Captain Lusk had passed him but a few minutes before he was hit. The grief in the regiment is deep, but his example will live and inspire all.’

W. D. L.

‘You probably know already what a tremendous lot James meant to the 6th—both officers and men—especially in the difficult times, and how unflinchingly courageous he was in facing their trials. He once showed written on a piece of paper the words, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”; and very truly He was with him always. . . .

‘I shall never forget his calm fearlessness and his constant cheerfulness at the Front.’

A. G. E. H.

‘It came as a blow to me when I saw him lying wounded in the trench, and I can hardly realize that he has left us; and we all feel here that in addition to having lost an Officer whose place can never be filled, we have lost a friend, who had endeared himself to all ranks by the high Christian principles which he lived up to, and his constant unselfishness and kindness to everyone. His influence has always been for good in the Battalion.

‘I regret that my duties prevent me from being present at the funeral to-morrow.’

J. B.

‘I have known Captain Lusk since the time he joined the 6th Battalion, and I would find it difficult to express with what love and admiration we all regarded him. He was a gentleman amongst gentlemen, and the fine, noble, generous and selfless qualities which ever dominated him, made it a pleasure and a privilege to have known and associated with him. One can never forget the great self-sacrifice and devotion to duty which he displayed after our attack at Festubert, in going over that bullet-

swept area and safely withdrawing our men, and thereafter gallantly seeking to attempt the rescue of our brave wounded on the field. Well did he deserve the Decoration bestowed on him by the French Government, and his noble and gallant conduct will ever be proudly remembered by the Battalion.'

J. C. McL.

'We of the 6th, The Cameronians, are under a cloud, a very dark and heavy cloud. We have lost a few good fellows since coming out here, but never one who was so universally loved and respected and whose loss will be so keenly felt. James Lusk was indeed a true Christian gentleman. We of inferior clay stood aghast and marvelled at his unfailing good-humour, his inexhaustible patience, his unshaken integrity and his continued self-effacement. He gave way to everybody, even the most junior of Subalterns, and yet there was not one of us but knew that he stood head and shoulders above us as a man. If ever a man followed hard in the Footsteps of Jesus Christ, that man

was James Lusk. I am proud to have been counted one of his friends.

‘By his death, the 6th have sustained an irreparable loss. We have lost a great friend with a great heart, and we have lost a soldier who was the backbone of the regiment and who added to its reputation.

‘May I tell you, that everywhere, not only in the Battalion but in the Brigade and Division, the news of his death was the cause of universal sorrow.’

D. L. G.

‘I had the honour to know your son in the regiment for a long time, but since mobilization he and I had been brought close together by our work, and I can say with pride that never did I meet a finer man. He was universally loved by us all, and by all he came in contact with. His death is a very heavy loss to you, but may I assure you that no death could have been nobler—he died, as he lived, a true hero. His memory will ever be cherished and honoured by the regiment he served so faithfully—his loss will leave a blank in the lives of his fellow Officers for many a long day.’

J. C. E. H.

‘ Believe me, we share in your great sorrow, and the regiment he loved so well will miss him greatly, for everyone loved and respected him—not alone for his great talents as a soldier, or for his bravery, but for his loveliness, and great striving after the Right. I personally feel as if I had lost a brother that can never be replaced, but it is some consolation to you and all of us, to know that he died, as he had lived—a very perfect Knight—for his Country and in the cause of Righteousness and Truth.’

J. H.

‘ The greatest privilege of my Chaplaincy, and one of the greatest privileges of my life, has been to live with your gallant son. His influence on the Battalion is incalculable. . . . I have never met any one who so consistently submerged all thought of self in the pursuit of duty and the consideration of others. One dare not even speak of his death in the ordinary terms as an unspeakable loss, for such lives cannot be lost, and seem to gain even greater power when they have passed

“to where beyond these voices there is peace.” ’

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‘ Many instances of his quiet resolute devotion and of his invariable chivalry have come to my recollection during the past weeks. . . .

‘ Nothing was a trouble to Captain Lusk if it lay in the way of what he considered duty, and I need not tell you that his ideal was very high.

‘ What and when he ate, and where he should sleep—very important items to most soldiers—were matters of least importance to him. We used to beseech him to have more regard for himself, and he only responded with a smile.

Yet when the comfort of others was concerned he would make a resolute fight. After a long march we arrived at our appointed billet, a small farm, to find that the Officers of another regiment had usurped our farmhouse. The Brigade Officer came upon the scene. Captain Lusk tackled him and would not let him go, until he had turned out the intruders and given us our right.

‘None was more touched than he by the death of any of our men. He made a point of being present at the burial, and on such occasions I have noticed the unconsciously upward glance of his eyes.

‘To myself your brother’s consideration and courtesy was unsurpassed. He must have seen my faults, yet he was always most forbearing. I used to say to him, “You are the real Padre of the regiment,” as indeed he was. Still he always honoured me as the Chaplain and gave me every opportunity in my work.

‘I visited the Battalion recently. Our talk was chiefly about your dear brother. Major Graham and Quartermaster Hamilton, who were more closely associated with him than I was, agreed with me that our fellowship with Captain Lusk was a privilege never to be forgotten. None of us can hope to meet with a more truly Christian gentleman.’

* * * *

‘Among the many casualties which have befallen the 6th Scottish Rifles, none can be more deeply or widely felt by Officers

and men than the death of Captain Lusk. We learned that he had been wounded on Christmas Day, but the message did not say that the wound was dangerous. We did not expect to hear that on the fourth day after the injury he succumbed.

‘We have reason to be proud of the Battalion. Major A. J. Graham, Captain J. Lusk, Captain D. L. Gray, Captain J. C. E. Hay, Private J. R. Brown, Private J. Craig, Private W. Hannah and Private J. Williamson have been mentioned in Despatches. Of those eight, seven will admit that there was none worthier of the distinction than he who is taken from them, nor any who better deserved the additional recognition given to him only among them, the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

‘To those who did not know him, any attempt to estimate the worth of Captain James Lusk, must seem exaggeration. His were not mere surface qualities. Indeed, a stranger on first meeting him might not discover any brilliancy. Those who lived with him learned what he was. He was a man of many accomplishments. A graduate of Cambridge, he had the

culture of a great University. He was a highly skilled engineer and showed a rare capacity for business. He had also acquired the art of managing men. He was a splendid horseman; it was good to observe his firm seat and to watch his determined mastery of a refractory steed. He was an accomplished musician who could charm with the music he drew from the piano or the pipe organ. He was a soldier of the finest type, master of the details of military duty, scrupulously careful and exact, faithful and fearless to a degree. One could not find a more unselfish man than he was. Anything good which he happened to have was generously at the disposal of others. If there was any hardship or privation, Lusk would take the worst place.

‘When the billet of one of our companies was shelled and burned and the Officers lost all their kit, the rest of us contributed such articles as we could spare for their supply. It was not much to give a razor or a shirt, or a pair of socks, but Lusk gave up his Wolseley valise—a fact which was revealed only by seeing his things lying in a heap in the corner of the

room. He would sleep without murmur on the hard earth of an unsavoury field because he considered it his duty to be with the transport. When he had secured a fairly comfortable billet for four of us in which there were three beds, we knew that Lusk would certainly choose to be the man who should lie on the floor, unless we found a fourth bed in some adjoining house. If the way to and from Headquarters of the trenches lay, as it generally did, through an "unhealthy" field or wood, Lusk would certainly accompany one who disliked solitude in such places, deaf to any protest, or the consideration that he himself would have to return alone. His quiet strength and indomitable courage banished every sign of fear.

'In the memorable charge of Festubert, which the Battalion accomplished at such awful cost, Captain Lusk was disappointed that he could not be one of the leaders in the attack. As Transport Officer his duties kept him in the rear, but he brought his supplies to the scene of action, and even lingered there quietly writing a letter in a "dug-out," though shells were bursting about him. It was he who

gathered together what was left of the Battalion when the attack was over, and brought them out of danger; he also who inspired a band of volunteers to make a long night march back to the place of slaughter, in the hope of recovering the wounded or burying the dead.

‘It seemed to one afterwards as though Lusk could hardly forgive himself for being among the survivors of that night when so many were wounded and killed. And now when he has met his death, not in the glory and excitement of an advance, but in the routine of holding the trenches, one might dare to say that he had attained his wish. He not only “bore without abuse the grand old name of gentleman”; on his shield of faith was blazoned the noblest and simplest device—the Cross—with the motto “To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” I may not write for print the name by which he passed among some of the men in the ranks; it would look irreverent; yet it showed a keen unscornful appreciation of their Officer’s character and of his loyalty to the Master Whom he served. Yet his piety was never a parade or an intrusion.

“ He never found fault with you, never
implied
Your wrong by his right, only men by
his side
Grew purer.”

‘ In the privilege of these months’ experience among the bravest and best of men who are fighting and have fought the good fight, I know nothing which has made more grateful and lasting impression than my intercourse with Captain Lusk. Because I know that my appreciation is not singular, but must be universally shared by all who knew him, because I am sure they wish our acknowledgement of the debt we owe to him to be not only admitted but proclaimed, I have ventured to pay this tribute to the Galahad among the Knights of the Cameronians.’

J. MAC G.

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